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JUNE, 1948

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LESLIE FIEDLER's story "The Teeth" appeared in the January **PR.**

SIDNEY HOOK is the author of "Reason, Social Myths and Democracy," "The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility," and "Education for Modern Man."

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, a former editor of **PR,** had a one-man show of his paintings last November in Paris, and in New York in February.

ERNEST NAGEL is a professor of philosophy at Columbia.

ISAAC ROSENFELD's second novel, "The Enemy," will be brought out later this year by Viking.

STEPHEN SPENDER is lecturing at Sarah Lawrence.

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An early Matisse drawing: courtesy of Mr. Allan D. Dowling.

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Elizabeth Bishop

OVER 2,000 ILLUSTRATIONS AND A COMPLETE CONCORDANCE

Thus should have been our travels:
serious, engravable.
The Seven Wonders of the World are tired
and a touch familiar, but the other scenes,
innumerable, though equally sad and still,
are foreign. Often the squatting Arab,
or group of Arabs, plotting, probably,
against our Christian Empire,
while one apart, with outstretched arm and hand
points to the Tomb, the Pit, the Sepulcher.
The branches of the date-palms look like files.
The cobbled courtyard, where the Well is dry,
is like a diagram, the brickwork conduits
are vast and obvious, the human figure
far gone in history or theology,
gone with its camel or its faithful horse.
Always the silence, the gesture, the specks of birds
suspended on invisible threads above the Site,
or the smoke rising solemnly, pulled by threads.
Granted a page alone or a page made up
of several scenes arranged in cattycornered rectangles
or circles set on stippled gray,
granted a grim lunette,
caught in the toils of an initial letter,
when dwelt upon, they all resolve themselves.
The eye drops, weighted, through the lines
the burin made, the lines that move apart
like ripples above sand,

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dispersing storms, God's spreading fingerprint,
and painfully, finally, that ignite
in watery prismatic white-and-blue.

Entering the Narrows at St. Johns
the touching bleat of goats reached to the ship.
We glimpsed them, reddish, leaping up the cliffs
among the fog-soaked weeds and butter-and-eggs.
And at St. Peter's the wind blew and the sun shone madly.
Rapidly, purposefully, the Collegians marched in lines,
crisscrossing the great square with black, like ants.
In Mexico the dead man lay
in a blue arcade; the dead volcanoes
glistened like Easter lilies.
The juke-box went on playing "Ay, Jalisco!"
And at Volubilis there were beautiful poppies
splitting the mosaics; the fat old guide made eyes.
In Dingle harbor a golden length of evening
the rotting hulks held up their dripping plush.
The Englishwoman poured tea, informing us
that the Duchess was going to have a baby.
And in the brothels of Marrakesh
the little pockmarked prostitutes
balanced their tea-trays on their heads
and did their belly-dances; flung themselves
naked and giggling, against our knees,
asking for cigarettes. It was somewhere near there
I saw what frightened me most of all:
a holy grave, not looking particularly holy,
one of a group under a keyhole-arched stone baldaquin
open to every wind from the pink desert.
An open, gritty, marble trough, carved solid
with exhortation, yellowed
as scattered cattle-teeth;
half-filled with dust, not even the dust
of the poor prophet paynim who once lay there.
In a smart burnoose Khadour looked on amused.

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Everything only connected by "and," and, "and."
Open the book. (The gilt rubs off the edges
of the pages and pollinates the fingertips.)
Open the heavy book. Why couldn't we have seen
this old Nativity while we were at it?
—the dark ajar, the rocks breaking with light,
an undisturbed, unbreathing flame,
colorless, sparkless, freely fed on straw,
and, lulled within, a family with pets,
—and looked and looked our infant sight away.

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Jean-Paul Sartre

LITERATURE IN OUR TIME*

What makes our position original, I believe, is that the war and the occupation, by precipitating us into a world in a state of fusion, perforce made us rediscover the absolute at the heart of relativity itself. For our predecessors the rule of the game was to save everybody, because suffering is atoned for, because nobody is bad voluntarily, because man's heart is unfathomable, because divine grace is shared equally. That meant that literature—apart from the Surrealist extreme left which simply spread mischief—tended to establish a sort of moral relativism. Christians no longer believed in hell. Sin was whatever was devoid of God; carnal love was love of God gone astray.

As democracy tolerated all opinions, even those which aimed expressly at destroying it, republican humanism, which was taught in the schools, made tolerance the primary virtue. Everything would be tolerated, even intolerance. Hidden truths had to be recognized in the silliest ideas, in the vilest feelings. For Léon Brunschvicg, the philosopher of the regime, who all his life assimilated, unified, and integrated, and who shaped three generations, evil and error were only false shows, fruits of separation, limitation, and finiteness. They were annihilated as soon as one overthrew the barriers which compartmentalized systems and collectivities.

The radicals followed Auguste Comte in this, that they held progress to be the development of order; thus, order was already there, in power, like the hunter's cap in the illustrated puzzles. It was only a matter of discovering it. That was how they passed their time; it was their spiritual exercise. They thereby justified everything—starting with themselves.

* This is a fourth selection from Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* A translation of the entire work will be published this fall by the Philosophical Library.

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The Marxists at least recognized the reality of oppression and capitalist imperialism, of the class struggle and misery. But the effect of dialectical materialism, as I have shown elsewhere, is to make Good and Evil vanish conjointly. There remains only the historical process, and then Stalinist communism does not attribute so much importance to the individual that his sufferings and even his death cannot be redeemed if they help to hasten the day when power is seized.

The notion of Evil, which had been abandoned, had fallen into the hands of some Manichaeans—anti-Semites, fascists, anarchists of the right—who used it to justify their bitterness, their envy, and their lack of understanding of history. That was enough to discredit it. For political realism as for philosophical idealism Evil was not a very serious matter.

We have been taught to take it seriously. It is neither our fault nor our merit if we lived in a time when torture has been a daily fact. Châteaubriant, Oradour, the Rue des Saussaies, Tulle, Dachau, and Auschwitz have all demonstrated to us that Evil is not an appearance, that knowing its causes does not dispel it, that it is not opposed to Good as a confused idea is to a clear one, that it is not the effect of passions which might be cured, of a fear which might be overcome, of a passing aberration which might be excused, of an ignorance which might be enlightened, that it can in no way be turned, brought back, reduced, and incorporated into idealistic humanism, like that shade of which Leibnitz has written that it is necessary for the glare of daylight.

Satan, Maritain once said, is pure. Pure, that is, without mixture and without remission. We have learned to know this horrible, this irreducible purity. It blazes forth in the close and almost sexual rapport between the executioner and his victim. For torture is first of all a matter of debasement; whatever the sufferings which have been endured, it is the victim who decides, as a last resort, what the moment is when they are unbearable and when he must talk. The supreme irony of torture is that the sufferer, if he breaks down and talks, applies his will as a man to denying that he is a man, makes himself the accomplice of his executioners and, by his own movement, precipitates himself into abjection. The executioner knows it; he watches for this weakness, not only because he will obtain the information he desires, but because it will prove to him once again that he is right in

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using torture and that man is an animal who must be led with a whip. Thus, he attempts to destroy the humanity in his fellow-creature. Also, as a consequence, in himself; he knows that the groaning, sweating, filthy creature who begs for mercy and abandons himself in a swooning consent with the throat-sounds of an amorous woman, and who yields everything and is even so carried away that he improves upon his betrayals because the consciousness that he has done evil is like a stone around his neck dragging him still farther down, exists also in his own image and that he—the executioner—is bearing down upon himself as much as upon his victim. If he wishes, on his own account, to escape this total degradation, he has no other recourse than to affirm his blind faith in an iron order which like a corset confines our repulsive weaknesses—in short, of committing man's destiny to the hands of inhuman powers.

A moment comes when torturer and tortured are in accord, the former because he has, in a single victim, symbolically gratified his hatred of all mankind, the latter because he can only bear his fault by pushing it to the limit, and because the only way he can endure his self-hatred is by hating all other men along with himself. Later, perhaps, the executioner will be hanged. Perhaps the victim, if he recovers, will be redeemed. But what will blot out this Mass in which two freedoms have communed in the destruction of the human? We knew that, to a certain extent, it was being celebrated everywhere in Paris while we were eating, sleeping, and making love. We heard whole blocks screaming and we understood that Evil, fruit of a free and sovereign will, is, like Good, absolute.

Perhaps a day will come when a happy age, looking back at the past, will see in this suffering and shame one of the paths which led to peace. But we were not on the side of history already made. We were, as I have said, *situated* in such a way that every lived minute seemed to us like something irreducible. Therefore, in spite of ourselves, we came to this conclusion, which will seem shocking to lofty souls: Evil cannot be redeemed.

But, on the other hand, most of the resisters, though beaten, burned, blinded, and broken, did not speak. They broke the circle of Evil and reaffirmed the human—for themselves, for us, and for their very torturers. They did it without witnesses, without help, without hope, often even without faith. For them it was not a matter

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of believing in man but of wanting to. Everything conspired to discourage them: so many indications everywhere about them, those faces bent over them, that misery within them. Everything concurred in making them believe that they were only insects, that man is the impossible dream of sneaks and squealers, and that they would awaken as vermin like everybody else.

This man had to be invented with their martyrized flesh, with their hunted thoughts which were already betraying them—invented on the basis of nothing, for nothing, in absolute gratuity. For it is within the human that one can distinguish means and ends, values and preferences, but they were still at the creation of the world and they had only to decide in sovereign fashion whether there would be anything more than the reign of the animal within it. They remained silent; man was born of this silence. We knew that every moment, all over Paris, man was a hundred times destroyed and reaffirmed.

Obsessed as we were by these tortures, a week did not go by that we did not ask ourselves: "Suppose I were tortured, what would I do?" And this question alone carried us to the very frontiers of ourselves and of the human. We oscillated between the no man's land where mankind denies itself, and the barren desert from which it surges and creates itself. Those who had immediately preceded us in the world, who had bequeathed us their culture, their wisdom, their customs, and their proverbs, who had built the houses that we lived in and who had marked the routes with the statues of their great men, practiced modest virtues and remained in the moderate regions. Their faults never caused them to fall so low that they did not find others beneath them who were more guilty, nor did their merits cause them to rise so high that they did not see other souls above them whose merit was greater. Their gaze encountered men farther than the eye can reach. The very sayings they made use of and which we had learned from them—"a fool always finds a bigger fool to admire him," "we always need someone smaller than ourselves"—their very manner of consoling themselves in affliction by telling themselves, whatever their unhappiness was, that there were others worse off, all goes to show that they considered mankind as a natural and infinite milieu that one could never leave and whose limits could not be touched. They died with a good conscience and without ever having explored their condition.

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Because of this, their writers gave them a literature of *average situations*. But we could no longer find it *natural* to be men when our best friends, if they were taken, could choose only between abjection and heroism, that is, between the two extremes of the human condition, beyond which there is no longer anything. If they were cowards and traitors, all men were above them; if heroic, all men were below them. In the latter case, which was the more frequent, they no longer felt humanity as a limitless milieu. It was a thin flame within them which they alone kept alive. It kept itself going in the silence which they opposed to their executioners. About them was nothing but the great polar night of the inhuman and of unknowingness, which they did not even *see,* which they divined in the glacial cold which transpierced them.

Our fathers always had witnesses and examples available. For these tortured men, there were no longer any. It was Saint-Exupéry who said in the course of a dangerous mission, "I am my own witness." The same for all of them; anguish and forlornness and the sweating of blood begin for a man when he can no longer have any other witness than himself. It is then that he drains the cup, that he experiences his human condition to the bitter end. Of course, we are quite far from having all felt this anguish, but it haunted us like a threat and a promise.

Five years. We lived entranced and as we did not take our profession of writer lightly, this state of trance still reflects itself in our writings. We have undertaken to create a literature of extreme situations. I am not at all claiming that in this we are superior to our elders. Quite the contrary. Bloch-Michel, who has earned the right to talk, has said that fewer virtues are needed in great circumstances than in small. It is not for me to decide whether he is right or whether it is better to be a Jansenist than a Jesuit. I rather think that there must be something of everything and that the same man cannot be one and the other at the same time.

Therefore, we are Jansenists because the age has made us such, and insofar as this has made us touch our limits I shall say that we are all metaphysical writers. I think that many among us would deny this designation or would not accept it without reservations, but this is the result of a misunderstanding. For metaphysics is not a sterile discussion about abstract notions which have nothing to do with

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experience. It is a living effort to embrace from within the human condition in its totality.

Forced by circumstances to discover the pressure of history, as Torricelli discovered atmospheric pressure, and tossed by the cruelty of the time into that forlornness from where one can see our condition as man to the very limit, to the absurd, to the night of unknowingness, we have a task for which we may not be strong enough (this is not the first time that an age, for want of talents, has lacked its art and its philosophy). It is to create a literature which unites and reconciles the metaphysical absolute and the relativity of the historical fact, and which I shall call, for want of a better name, the literature of great circumstances.[1] It is not a question for us of escaping into the eternal or of abdicating in the face of what the unspeakable Mr. Zaslavsky refers to in *Pravda* as the "historical process."

The questions which our age puts to us and which remain *our* questions are of another order. How can one make himself a man in, by, and for history? Is there a possible synthesis between our unique and irreducible consciousness and our relativity; that is, between a dogmatic humanism and a perspectivism? What is the relationship between morality and politics? How, considering the quality of our intentions, are we to take up the objective consequences of our acts? We can rigorously attack these problems in the abstract by philosophical reflection. But if we want to live them, to support our thoughts by those fictive and concrete experiences which are what novels are, we have at our disposal the technique which I have already analyzed here and whose ends are rigorously opposed to our designs. Specially perfected to relate the events of an individual life in the bosom of a stable society, it enabled the novelist to record, describe, and explain the weakening, the vections, the involutions, and the slow disorganization of a particular system in the middle of a universe at rest. But from 1940 on, we found ourselves in the midst of a cyclone. If we wished to orient ourselves in it we suddenly found

[1] What are Camus, Malraux, Koestler, etc. now producing if not a literature of extreme situations? Their characters are at the height of power or in prison cells, on the eve of death or of being tortured or of killing. Wars, coups d'état, revolutionary action, bombardments, massacres. There you have their everyday life. On every page, in every line, it is always the whole man who is in question.

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ourselves at grips with a problem of a higher order of complexity, exactly as a quadratic equation is more complex than a linear. It was a matter of describing the relationship of different partial systems to the total system which contains them when both are in movement and the movements condition each other reciprocally.

In the stable world of the prewar French novel, the author, situated at a gamma point which represented absolute rest, had fixed guide-marks at his disposal to determine the movements of his characters. But we, involved in a system in full evolution, could only know relative movements. Whereas our predecessors thought that they could keep themselves outside of history and that they had soared to heights from which they could judge events as they really were, circumstances have plunged us into our time. But since we were in it, how could we see it as a whole? Since we were *situated,* the only novels we could dream of writing were novels of *situation,* without internal narrators or all-knowing witnesses. In short, if we wished to give an account of our age, we had to make the technique of the novel shift from Newtonian mechanics to generalized relativity; we had to people our books with minds that were half lucid and half overcast, some of which we might consider with more sympathy than others, but none of which would have a privileged point of view either upon the event or upon themselves. We had to present creatures whose reality would be the tangled and contradictory tissue of each one's evaluations of all the other characters—himself included—and the evaluation by all the others of himself, and who could never decide from within whether the changes of their destinies came from their own efforts, or from their own faults, or possibly from the course of the universe.

Finally, we had to leave doubts, expectations, and the unachieved throughout our works, to give the reader the feeling that his view of the plot and the characters was simply one among many others, leaving it to him to conjecture for himself without guiding him or letting him guess our feeling.

But, on the other hand, as I have just pointed out, our very historicity restored us because from day to day we were living that absolute which it had seemed at first to take away from us. If our plans, our passions, and our acts were explicable and relative from the viewpoint of past history, they again took on in this forlornness

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the uncertainty and the risks of the present, as well as their irreducible density.

We were not unaware of the fact that a time would come when historians would be able to survey from all angles this stretch of time which we lived feverishly from minute to minute, when they would illuminate our past by our future and would decide upon the value of our undertakings by their outcome and upon the sincerity of our intentions by their success. But the irreversibility of our age belonged only to us. We had to save or lose ourselves gropingly in this irreversible time. These events pounced upon us like thieves and we had to do our job in the face of the incomprehensible and the untenable, to bet, to conjecture without evidence, to undertake in uncertainty and persevere without hope. Our age would be explained, but no one could keep it from having been inexplicable to us. No one could remove the bitter taste, the taste it will have had for us alone and which will disappear with us.

The novels of our elders related the event as having taken place in the past. Chronological order permitted the reader to see the logical and universal relationship, the eternal verities. The slightest change was already understood. A past was delivered to us which had already been thought through. Perhaps two centuries from now an author who may decide to write a historical novel about the war of 1940 may find this a suitable technique. But if it occurred to us to meditate on our future writings, we were convinced that no art could really be ours if it did not restore to the event its brutal freshness, its ambiguity, it unforeseeability, if it did restore to time its actual course, to the world its rich and threatening opacity, and to man his long patience.

We did not want to delight our public with its superiority to a dead world—we wanted to take it by the throat. Let every character be a trap, let the reader be caught in it, and let him be tossed from one consciousness to another as from one absolute and irremediable universe to another similarly absolute; let him be uncertain of the very uncertainty of the heroes, disturbed by their disturbance, flooded with their present, docile beneath the weight of their future, invested with their perceptions and feelings as by high insurmountable cliffs. In short, let him feel that every one of their moods and every movement of their mind encloses all mankind and is, in its time and place,

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in the womb of history and, despite the perpetual juggling of the present by the future, a descent without recourse toward Evil or an ascent toward Good which no future will be able to contest. This is what explains the success we have accorded Kafka's works and those of the American novelists. As for Kafka, everything has been said: that he wanted to paint a picture of bureaucracy, the progress of disease, the condition of the Jews in eastern Europe, the quest for inaccessible transcendence, and the world of grace when grace is lacking. This is all true. Let me say that he wanted to describe the human condition. But what we were particularly sensitive to was that in this trial perpetually in session, which ends abruptly and evilly, whose judges are unknown and out of reach, in the vain efforts of the accused to know the leaders of the prosecution, in this defense patiently assembled which turns against the defender and figures in the evidence for the prosecution, in this absurd present which the characters live with great earnestness and whose keys are elsewhere, we recognize history and ourselves in history.

We were far from Flaubert and Mauriac. There was in Kafka, at the very least, a new way of presenting destinies which were tricked and undermined at their foundation, which were lived minutely, ingeniously, and modestly, of rendering the irreducible truth of appearances and of making felt beyond them another truth which will always be denied us. One does not imitate Kafka. One does not rewrite him. One had to extract a precious encouragement from his books and look elsewhere.

As for the Americans, it was not their cruelty or pessimism which moved us. We recognized in them men who had been swamped, lost in too large a continent as we were in history and who tried without traditions, with the means available to render their stupor and forlornness in the midst of incomprehensible events. The success of Faulkner, Hemingway, and Dos Passos was not the effect of snobbism, or at least, not at first. It was the defense reflex of a literature which, feeling itself threatened because its techniques and its myths were no longer going to allow it to cope with the historical situation, grafted foreign methods upon itself in order to be able to fulfill its function in new situations.

Thus, at the very moment that we were facing the public, circumstances forced us to break with our predecessors. They had chosen

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literary idealism and had presented us with events across a privileged subjectivity. For us, historical relativism, by positing the a priori equivalence of all subjectivities,[2] restored to the living event all its value and led us back, in literature, to dogmatic realism by way of absolute subjectivism. They thought that they were justifying, at least apparently, the foolish business of story-telling by ceaselessly bringing to the reader's attention, explicitly or by allusion, the existence of an author. We hope that our books remain in the air all by themselves and that their words, instead of pointing backwards toward the one who has designed them, will be toboggans, forgotten, unnoticed, and solitary, which will hurl the reader into the midst of a universe where there are no witnesses; in short, we hope that our books may exist in the manner of things, of plants, of events, and not seem merely the products of man. We want to drive providence from our works as we have driven it from our world. We should, I believe,

[2] Of course, some minds are richer than others, more intuitive, or better qualified for analysis or synthesis. Some of them are even prophetic and some are in a better position to foresee because they hold certain cards in their hand or because they discern a broader horizon. But these differences are a posteriori and the evaluation of the present and the near future remains conjectural. For *us* too the event appears only through subjectivities. But its transcendence comes from the fact that it exceeds them all because it extends through them and reveals to each person a different aspect of itself and of himself.

Thus, our technical problem is to find an orchestration of consciousnesses which may permit us to render the multidimensionality of the event. Moreover, in giving up the fiction of the omniscient narrator, we have assumed the obligation of suppressing the intermediaries between the reader and the subjectivities—the viewpoints of our characters. It is a matter of having him enter into their minds as into a windmill. He must even coincide successively with each one of them. We have learned from Joyce to look for a second kind of realism, the raw realism of subjectivity without mediation or distance. Which leads us to profess a third realism, that of temporality. Indeed, if without mediation we plunge the reader into a consciousness, if we refuse him all means of surveying the whole, then the time of this consciousness must be imposed upon him without abridgment. If I pack six months into a single page, the reader jumps straight out of the book.

This last aspect raises difficulties that none of us has resolved and which are perhaps partially insoluble, for it is neither possible nor desirable to limit all novels to the story of a single day. Even if one should resign himself to that, the fact would remain that devoting a book to twenty-four hours rather than to one, or to an hour rather than to a minute, implies the intervention of the author and a transcendent choice. It will then be necessary to mask this choice by purely aesthetic procedures, to practice sleight of hand, and, as always in art, to lie in order to be true.

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no longer define beauty by the form nor even by the matter, but by the density of being.[3]

II

The C.P. aligns its politics with that of Soviet Russia because it is in this country only that one finds the rough draught of a socialist organization. But if it is true that Russia began the social revolution, it is also true that she has not ended it. The retardation of her industry, her shortage of supervisory personnel, and the masses' lack of culture have prevented her from realizing socialism by herself and even from imposing it on other countries by the contagion of her example. If the revolutionary movement which started from Moscow could have spread to other nations, it would have continued to evolve in Russia itself in proportion to the ground it gained outside. Contained within the Soviet frontiers, it congealed into a defensive and conservative nationalism because it had to save, at any cost, the results it had achieved. But at the very moment when it was becoming the Mecca of the working classes, Russia then saw that it was impossible on one hand for her to assume her historical mission and, on the other, to deny it. She was forced to withdraw into herself, to apply herself to creating supervisors, to catch up on her equipment, and to perpetuate herself by an authoritarian regime having the form of a revolution at stasis. As the European parties which derived from her, and which were preparing for the coming of the proletariat, were nowhere strong enough to take the offensive, she had to use them as the advance bastions of her defense. But as they could serve her, in regard to the masses, only by fostering revolutionary politics, she has—having never lost hope of becoming the leader of the European proletariat if circumstances should some day show themselves more favorable—left them their red flag and their faith. Thus the forces of the World Revolution have been diverted to the

[3] From this viewpoint, absolute objectivity, that is, the story in the third person which presents characters solely by their conduct and words without explanation or incursion into their inner life, while preserving strict chronological order, is rigorously equivalent to absolute subjectivity. Logically, to be sure, it might be claimed that there is at least a witnessing consciousness, that of the reader. But the fact is that the reader forgets to see himself while he looks and the story retains for him the innocence of a virgin forest whose trees grow far from sight.

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maintenance of a revolution in a state of hibernation. Still it must be acknowledged that, insofar as it has honestly believed in the possibility, even though remote, of seizing power by insurrection, and insofar as it has made it its business to weaken the bourgeoisie and to bore from within the Socialist Party, the C.P. has practiced a negative criticism of capitalistic institutions and regimes while maintaining the outer appearances of freedom. Before 1939 it used everything: pamphlets, satires, bitter novels, Surrealistic violence, overwhelming evidence regarding our colonial methods. Since 1944 things have become more aggravated; a collapsing Europe has simplified the situation. Two powers remain standing, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.; each one frightens the other. From fear, as we know, comes anger, and from anger, blows.

Now, the U.S.S.R. is the less strong. Hardly out of a war which she had feared for twenty years, she still has to temporize, to catch up in the armament race, to retighten the dictatorship internally, and externally to assure herself of allies, vassals, and positions.

The revolutionary tactic is changed into diplomacy. It must have Europe on its side. Thus, it must appease the bourgeoisie, lull it to sleep with fables, and at any cost keep it from throwing itself into the Anglo-Saxon camp out of fright. The time has quite passed when l'*Humanité* could write: "Every bourgeois who meets a workman ought to be scared." Never have the Communists been so powerful in Europe, and yet never have the chances of a revolution been slighter. If a Communist faction should somewhere consider the possibility of seizing power, this attempt would be nipped in the bud. The Anglo-Saxons have at their disposal a hundred ways of annihilating it even without recourse to arms, and for that matter the Soviets would not look upon it favorably. If, by chance, the insurrection succeeded, it would simply vegetate without spreading. If by some miracle it finally became contagious, it would risk being the occasion of a third world war. For it is no longer for the coming of the proletariat that the Communists are preparing in their respective nations, but war, plain and simple war. If victorious, the U.S.S.R. will spread its regime to Europe; the nations will fall like ripe fruit; if beaten, it's all up with her and the Communists. To reassure the bourgeoisie without losing the confidence of the masses, and to permit it to govern while appearing to keep up the offensive, and to occupy

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positions of command without letting itself be compromised—that's the politics of the C.P. Between 1939 and 1940 we were the witnesses and victims of the decay of a war; today we are present at the decaying of a revolutionary situation.

If it should be asked whether the writer, in order to reach the masses, should offer his services to the Communist Party, I answer no. The politics of Stalinist communism is incompatible in France with the honest practice of the literary craft. A party which is planning a revolution should have nothing to lose. For the C.P. there is something to lose and things to handle circumspectively. As its immediate goal can no longer be the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat by force, but rather that of safeguarding a Russia which is in danger, it now presents an ambiguous appearance. Progressive and revolutionary in its doctrine and in its avowed ends, it has become conservative in its means. Even before it has seized power, it has adopted the turn of mind, the reasoning, and the artifices of those who have long since attained it, those who feel that it is escaping them and who want to maintain themselves. There is something in common, and it is not talent, between Joseph de Maistre and M. Garaudy. And generally it is enough to skim through a piece of Communist writing to pick out at random a hundred conservative procedures: persuasion by repetition, by intimidation, by veiled threats, by forceful and scornful affirmation, by cryptic allusions to demonstrations that are not forthcoming, by exhibiting so complete and superb a conviction that, from the very start, it places itself above all debate, casts its spell, and ends by becoming contagious; the opponent is never answered; he is discredited; he belongs to the police, to the Intelligence Service; he's a fascist. As for proofs, they are never given, because they are terrible and implicate too many people. If you insist upon knowing them, you are told to stop right there and to take someone's word for the accusation. "Don't force us to bring them out; you'll be sorry if you do." In short the Communist intellectual adopts the attitude of the staff which condemned Dreyfus on secret evidence. He also reverts, to be sure, to the Manichaeanism of the reactionaries, though he divides the world according to other principles. For the Stalinist a Trotskyist is an incarnation of evil, like the Jew for Maurras. Everything that comes from him is necessarily bad. On the contrary, the possession of certain titles serves as a seal

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of approval. Compare this sentence of Joseph de Maistre, "The married woman is necessarily chaste," with this one of a correspondent of *Action,* "The communist is the *permanent* hero of our time." That there are heroes in the Communist Party—let me be the first to admit it. So what? Has no married woman ever been weak? No, since she is married before God. And is it enough to enter the Party to become a hero? Yes, since the C.P. is the party of heroes. But what if someone cited the name of a Communist who sometimes was not all he should be? It's because he wasn't a *real* Communist.

In the nineteenth century one had to give all sorts of guaranties and lead an exemplary life in order to cleanse oneself in the eyes of the bourgeois of the sin of writing, since literature is, in essence, heresy. The situation has not changed except that it is now the Communists, that is, the qualified representatives of the proletariat, who as a matter of principle regard the writer as suspect. Even though he may be irreproachable in his morals, a Communist intellectual bears within him this original defect: that he entered the party *freely;* he was led to this decision by a thoughtful reading of *Capital,* a critical examination of the historical situation, an acute sense of justice and generosity, and a taste for solidarity; all this is proof of an independence which doesn't smell so very good. He entered the party by free choice; therefore, he can leave it.[4] He entered because he had criticized the politics of his class of origin; therefore, he will be able to criticize that of the representatives of his class of adoption. Thus in the very action by which he inaugurates a new life, there is a malediction which will weigh upon him all through this life. From the moment of ordination there begins for him a long trial, similar to the one Kafka has described for us, in which the judges are unknown and the dossiers secret, where the only definitive sentences are condemnations. It is not up to his invisible accusers to give proof of his crime, as is customary in justice; it is for him to prove his innocence. As everything he writes can be held against him and as he knows it, each of his works presents the ambiguous character of being both a public appeal in the name of the C.P. and a secret plea for his own cause. Everything that from the outside, for the readers, seems a chain of peremptory affirmations, appears within the Party, in the eyes of the judges,

[4] The worker has joined the C.P. under the pressure of circumstances. He is less suspect because his possible choices are more limited.

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as a humble and clumsy attempt at self-justification. When to *us* he appears most brilliant and most effective, he is perhaps then most guilty. Sometimes it seems to us—and perhaps he too believes it—that he has been raised into the hierarchy of the Party and that he has become its spokesman, but he is being tested or tricked; the levels are faked; when he thinks he's high up, he's far down. You can read his writings a hundred times but you'll never be able to decide on their real importance. When Nizan, who was in charge of foreign politics for *Ce soir,* was in all honesty trying his utmost to prove that our only chance for salvation lay in a Franco-Russian pact, his secret judges, who let him talk on, already knew about Ribbentrop's conversations with Molotov. If he thinks that he can get out of it by a corpselike obedience, he is mistaken. He is expected to have wit, pungency, lucidity, and inventiveness. But at the same time that these are required of him, he is penalized for these virtues, for they are, in themselves, tendencies toward crime. How is he to practice the critical spirit? The flaw is in him like the worm in a piece of fruit. He can please neither his readers, his judges, nor himself. In the eyes of everyone and even of himself he is only a guilty subjectivity which deforms knowledge by reflecting it in his troubled waters. This deformation can be useful; as his readers make no distinction between what comes from the author and what from the "historical process," it is always possible to disclaim him. It is taken for granted that he dirties his hands in his job, and as his mission is to express C. P. politics from day to day, his articles still remain when the line has long since changed, and these are what the opponents of Stalinism refer to when they want to show its contradictions or versatility. The writer is not only *presumed guilty in advance;* he is charged with all the faults of the past, since his name remains attached to the errors of the Party, and he is the scapegoat of all the political purges.

Nevertheless, it is not impossible that he may hold out for a long time if he learns to keep his qualities in leash when they run the risk of pulling him too far. Yet he must not be cynical. Cynicism is as serious a vice as good will. Let him know how to keep his eyes shut; let him see what need not be seen, and let him forget sufficiently what he has seen in order never to write about it, yet let him remember it sufficiently so that in future he may avoid looking at it; let him carry his criticism far enough to determine the point where it should

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be brought to a halt, that is, let him go beyond this point in order to be able in future to avoid the temptation of going beyond it, but let him know how to detach himself from this prospective criticism, to put it in parentheses, and to regard it as null and void; in short, let him at all times be aware that the mind is finite, bounded everywhere by magic frontiers, by mists, like the primitives who can count up to twenty and are mysteriously denied the power of going any further. This artificial fog which he must be always ready to spread between himself and risky evidence, we shall call, very simply, dishonesty. But we're not through yet: let him avoid speaking too often about dogmas; it's not good to show them in broad daylight; the works of Marx, like the Bible of the Catholics, are dangerous to the one who approaches them without a director of conscience; there is one in each cell; if doubts or scruples arise it is to him that one must talk. Nor should you put too many Communists in your novels or on the stage; if they have faults, they run the risk of displeasing; if too perfect, they bore. Stalinist politics has no desire to find its image in literature because it knows that a portrait is already a contestation. One can get out of it by painting the "permanent hero" *en profil perdu*—by making him appear at the end of the story to draw conclusions, or by everywhere suggesting his presence but without showing it, as Daudet with the Arlésienne. As far as possible, avoid bringing up the revolution; that's rather dated. The European proletariat no more governs its destiny than does the bourgeoisie; history is written elsewhere. It must be slowly weaned of its old dreams, and the perspective of insurrection must be gently replaced by that of war. If the writer conforms to all these prescriptions, he will not be the more liked on that account. He's a useless mouth; he doesn't work with his hands. He knows it; he suffers from an inferiority complex; he is almost ashamed of his craft and puts as much zeal into bowing before the workers as Jules Lemaître put into bowing before the generals around 1900.

During this period, the Marxist doctrine—which is quite intact—has been withering away; for want of internal controversy, it has been degraded to a stupid determinism. Marx, Lenin, and Engels said any number of times that explanation by causes had to yield to the dialectical process. But the dialectic does not admit of being put into the formulas of a catechism. An elementary scientism is being

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spread. History is accounted for by juxtapositions of causal and linear series. Shortly before the war, Politzer, the last of the great minds of French Communism, was forced to teach that "the brain secretes thought" as an endocrine gland secretes hormones; when the Communist intellectual today wants to interpret history or human behavior, he borrows from bourgeois ideology a deterministic psychology based on mechanism and the law of interest.

But there is worse. The conservation of the C.P. is today accompanied by an opportunism which contradicts it. It is not only a matter of safeguarding the U.S.S.R., but it is also necessary to deal tactfully with the bourgeoisie. Thus, they talk its language: family, country, religion, morality. And as they have not thereby given up the idea of weakening it, they try to fight it on its own ground by improving upon its principles. The result of this tactic is to superimpose two contradictory conservatisms, materialist scholasticism and Christian moralism. The truth is that once you abandon all logic it is not so difficult to pass from one to the other because both suppose the same sentimental attitude; it is a matter of holding fast to positions which are threatened, of refusing to discuss, and of masking fear behind anger. But the point is that the intellectual, by definition, must *also* use logic. Therefore, he is asked to cover up the contradictions by sleight of hand. He must do his best to reconcile the irreconcilable, to unite by force ideas which repel each other, and to cover up the soldering by glittering layers of fine style—to say nothing of the task which has fallen to him only recently, that is, to steal the history of France from the bourgeoisie, to annex the great Ferré, little Bara, Saint Vincent de Paul, and Descartes. Poor Communist intellectuals. They have fled the ideology of their class of origin only to find it again in the class they have chosen. Work, family, country—no more laughing at it, they've got to sing it. I imagine that they must often rather want to let loose, but they are chained. They are allowed to roar at phantoms or against some writers who have remained free and who represent nothing.

They'll start naming illustrious writers. To be sure. I recognize the fact that they had talent. Is it an accident if they no longer have any? I have shown above that the work of art, which is an absolute end, is opposed in essence to bourgeois utilitarianism. Do they think that it can accommodate itself to Communist utilitarianism? In a

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genuinely revolutionary party it would find the propitious climate for its blossoming because the freedom of man and the coming of the classless society are likewise absolute goals, unconditioned exigencies which literature can reflect in its own exigency. But the C.P. today has entered the infernal circle of means. It must take and keep key positions, that is, means of acquiring means. When ends withdraw, when means are swarming like gnats as far as the eye can see, the work of art in turn becomes a means. It enters the chain. Its ends and its principles become external to it. It is governed from the outside. It no longer makes demands. It takes man by the belly or the short hairs. The writer maintains the appearance of talent, that is, the art of finding words which gleam, but something is dead within. Literature has changed into propaganda.[5] Yet it is someone like M. Garaudy, a Communist and a propagandist, who accuses me of being a gravedigger. I could return the insult, but I prefer to plead guilty; if I could do so, I would bury literature with my own hands rather than make it serve ends which utilize it. But why the excitement? Gravediggers are honest people, certainly unionized, perhaps Communists. I'd rather be a gravedigger than a lackey.

Since we are still free, we won't join the C.P. watchdogs. The fact that we have talent does not depend upon us, but as we have chosen the profession of writing, each of us is responsible for literature, and whether or not it becomes alienated does depend upon us. It is sometimes claimed that our books reflect the hesitations of the petty bourgeoisie which decides for neither the proletariat nor for capitalism. That's false; we've made up our minds. We are then told that our choice is ineffectual and abstract, that it is an intellectual game if it is not accompanied by our adhesion to a revolutionary party. I don't deny it, but it is not our fault if the C.P. is no longer a revolutionary party. It is true that today in France one can hardly reach the working classes if not through the Party. But only loose thinking can identify their cause with the C.P.'s.

Even if, as citizens, we can in strictly specific circumstances support its politics with our votes, that does not mean that we should serve it with our pens. If the two alternatives are really the bourgeoisie and the C.P., then the choice is impossible. For we do not have the

[5] In Communist literature in France, I find only one genuine writer. Nor is it accidental that he writes about mimosa and beach pebbles.

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right to write for the oppressing class *alone,* nor to join forces with a party which asks us to work dishonestly and with a bad conscience. Insofar as the Communist Party channelizes, almost in spite of itself, the aspirations of an entire oppressed class which irresistibly leads it to demand, for fear of being "outflanked on the left," such measures as peace with the Viet Nam or the increase of salaries—which its whole political line is inclined to avoid—we are with this party against the bourgeoisie; insofar as certain well-intentioned bourgeois circles recognize that spirituality must be simultaneously a free negativity and a free construction, we are with these bourgeois against the C.P. Insofar as a scurvy, opportunistic, conservative, and deterministic ideology is in contradiction with the very essence of literature we are against both the C.P. and the bourgeoisie. That means clearly that we are writing against everybody, that we have readers but no public. Bourgeois who have broken with our class but who have remained bourgeois in our morals, separated from the proletariat by the Communist screen, we remain up in the air; our good will serves no one, not even us; we are in the age of the undiscoverable public. And what is worse still, we are writing against the current.

The authors of the eighteenth century helped make history because the historical perspective of the moment was revolution and because a writer can and ought to align himself on the side of revolution if it is proven that there is no other means of bringing an end to oppression. But the writer today can in no case approve of a war, because the social structure of war is dictatorship, because its results are always a matter of chance, and because, whatever happens, its costs are infinitely greater than the gains, and finally because war alienates literature by making it serve the propagandistic hullabaloo.

Since our historical perspective is war, since we are asked to choose between the Anglo-Saxon and the Soviet blocs, and since we refuse to prepare for war with either one or the other, we have fallen outside of history and are speaking in the desert. We are not even left with the illusion of winning our case by means of an appeal; there will be no appeal, and we know that the posthumous fate of our works will depend neither upon our talents nor our efforts, but upon the results of future conflicts. In the event of a Soviet victory, we will be passed over in silence until we die a second time; in the

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event of an American victory, the best of us will be put into the jars of literary history and won't be taken out again.

A clear-sighted view of the darkest possible situation is in itself already an optimistic act. It implies, in effect, that the situation can be *thought* about, that is, that we are not lost in a dark forest and that, on the contrary, we can break away from it, at least in spirit, that we can examine it and thus already go beyond it and take up our resolutions in the face of it, even if these resolutions are hopeless. Our engagement must begin the moment we are repulsed and excommunicated by the Churches, when the art of writing, wedged in between different propagandas, seems to have lost its characteristic effectiveness. It is not a question of adding to the exigencies of literature, but simply of serving them altogether, even without hope.

(*Translated by Bernard Frechtman*)

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Isaac Rosenfeld

THREE PARABLES AND A DISSERTATION

1. A HORSE

There was a soldier had a horse, a good black horse, whose legs were both dainty and strong, whose mane and tail were coarse as horse hair is, and yet glossy and silken, and whose eyes were at once animal and human. The soldier was not so remarkable, for he had less in him of the beast than the horse had of man; he was a kind, but simple and ordinary fellow who could ride well enough but not so well as some can. The two of them were friends and confided in each other, though the horse hadn't the power of speech. The soldier talked and the horse listened and understood, which makes a conversation.

The two traveled through the country when there was no war, going from town to town, the soldier looking for work. In this way they met many people, all of whom admired the power and wisdom, the strength and daintiness of the horse. The soldier received many offers for his animal, some of them generous, but he would not think of parting with his friend; and the horse never had reason to feel uneasy. The soldier also met many women in the course of his travels. To some of them he made love.

In a certain part of the country, where they stayed for awhile, the soldier met a girl who was pretty in an ambiguous way, so that he could not decide whether he wanted her. Sometimes he thought her lovely, sometimes, not at all; nor could he strike a mean and consider her, say, fair, for there is no single and clear impression to which the idea of a compromise can correspond. He met her many times during the day as he was riding down the road, and again in the evening, and every time he saw her he was puzzled what to do with her. The girl would always stop to pet the horse; but for the

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soldier she had only an ambiguous smile and an ambiguous greeting, which did not help at all.

The soldier, at a loss, confessed his trouble to the horse, and while he spoke he made up his mind; he decided she was not for him. So he said, "Why don't you take her? Her name is Zelda."

The soldier said this as a joke; for when one must dismiss the possibility of love, it is best to do so humorously. But the horse took his master seriously. It had never occurred to him that he could love a girl. But now that his master had spoken, why, it must be so. And at once the horse found himself in love with Zelda.

If he were free to love the girl, he must be free to see her. Therefore the horse left his master that night and went to call on the girl. He knocked with his hoof on the door of her house. The door was no sooner opened than it was slammed in his face. This the horse could not understand. If one is given freedom, how is it possible that the conditions of freedom should not come along with the gift? He remained for a long time in front of the house, thoughtfully pawing the ground. It is not possible, decided the horse, and he went round the back way and poked his head through Zelda's bedroom window. Zelda screamed. The horse ran away.

Thereafter he never knew a day of peace. He said to himself: "All my life I was admired as a horse; but now that I am in love, I am treated as a monster. Is there something monstrous in being in love? That cannot be. Then is there something monstrous in being a horse? Now that I am in love, it must be so. But how can I help being in love, since I am free to love? Is it my fault I am free? Am I to blame that I'm a horse? But how can I remain content with being a horse? Oh this burden, heavier than any I ever carried on my back!"

The horse thought of dashing himself off a cliff, but it was flat country. He refused to eat and went about in a weakened condition, barely able to drag his legs, and weeping all the time. The soldier did not understand; he thought age had prematurely overtaken the animal, and the horse, thinking that death would be welcome, did not correct his master. He bore him gently and slowly up and down the road in his weakness, though he now despised the soldier for his limited understanding. One day they met the girl on the road. The soldier, whose love for another woman was prospering,

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did not remember his joke about Zelda until she had passed by without greeting either horse or rider. "Well," said the soldier to his horse, "how did you make out?" The horse broke into a wild gallop, tripped over a root and fell, breaking his leg. The master was not hurt. "Now," thought the horse, "he will shoot me, and it's just as well."

2. A CLERK

A certain government clerk, who held a minor post in the local branch of the local division of the general office, made an appointment, after much wheedling and intrigue, with another government clerk, who held a more important post in the same branch of the same division of the same office. The minor clerk was seeking to advance himself and was prepared to raise charges against another clerk, who stood in his way. To make the best possible impression on his superior, he laid out his best suit, his Sunday shoes, and a white shirt which had been boiled and starched in the laundry. Before dressing, he shaved himself. He had had in mind going to the barber, but when he thought of the price of the shave, and of the tip, which in this case would have had to be a little more handsome than usual—barbers have a way of undermining the reputations of those who displease them—the clerk decided to shave himself. He lathered his face, stropped his razor and set to work, first on one cheek, then on the other. He had cleared his face of stubble, suffering only a few scratches, which didn't bleed much. The neck, the most difficult part of his beard to shave, he left for the last. He worked from the chin down, and was finally satisfied that he had shaved his neck well enough, when he noticed quite a number of long hairs growing up from his chest. He removed his undershirt and shaved these hairs, too. There was certainly a line beyond which he need not have continued. But whether from carelessness or the habit of carefulness which he had acquired in his work, he went beyond this line, and having brought his razor deep into the thick, close hairs that grew on his chest, he thought he might as well shave all his chest. This he did, not without difficulty. When his chest was free of hair, he noticed that a thin strip of hair ran down the middle of his body, and he went on to shave this, too,

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as to stop now would have been to leave a gratuitous contrast between the clean and the overgrown parts. The clerk took off the rest of his clothes and began to shave his belly.

It occurred to him, however, that if he proceeded on the principle of shaving himself wherever hair grew, he would have a considerable job on his hands, as he was quite a hairy person; besides, his time was running short and he would have to hurry to keep the appointment. He therefore decided to draw an arbitrary line, beyond which he would not go. This he drew, as he thought proper, just at the groin. But when he came to the groin, he discovered that it was impossible to determine the exact location of the arbitrary line, for his pubic hair did not begin to grow all at once, at one place, but spread over quite an area of vagueness. So he was obliged to shave his groin, which drained his nerve, for he feared giving himself an injury. In this manner, working his razor always faster and faster, he shaved his entire body, suffering more and more cuts as the edge grew dull. He shaved his thighs, calves, shins, ankles and feet, then his arms and armpits, his forearms and his hands; and when this was done, he felt compelled to shave his eyebrows and the hair that grew on his head. Not until he was completely free of hair did he put away his razor, which was nicked and covered with blood. It was now too late to keep the appointment; and for that matter, until his cuts healed and enough hair grew back to allow him to look presentable, he would not even be able to go to his job, let alone advancing himself. He would not even dare go out in the street. He saw that he would surely starve to death before his hair grew back. Therefore he took up the razor and used it, for the last time, to cut his throat.

3. A CYCLIST IN THE HILLS

Near the top of a steep hill, which was but one of the lower foothills to a range of mountains, there was a summer camp for poets, short story writers, and novelists. One day a young man rode up the hill on a bicycle and stopped at the camp to rest. When asked what he did, he said he rode. Wrote what? asked the writers. No, not wrote, *rode*—his bicycle, replied the young man. Was that all he did? Yes, that was all. Then why had he come to the camp?

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asked all the assembled writers in their pride. He was merely resting there, and meant to go on shortly. Where? Why, on up the hill. How? On his bicycle, of course. What, on the bicycle! Surely he meant he would push it up? No, he meant to ride it. But up a hill! How is that possible? It is, said the young man. The writers were skeptical. They argued with the young man and with one another and concluded one of two things: either he was not telling the truth or, if he was, then he was wasting his energy—the proper work for a young man was a work of the imagination.

"But this is the imagination!" exclaimed the cyclist, and he swung his arm about, pointing first down into the valley, then round to the hills, and then on up to the high mountains. And he leaped onto his bicycle and rode up the steep hill, and then up the next hill, pedaling effortlessly, until he was out of sight.

DISSERTATION

No parable without a moral. I would have set down a moral after each parable had I not, in each case, felt some uncertainty as to what the moral might be. The first parable, it struck me, was without moral. I saw it as a matter of deciding whether or not the horse was right; he had, as it were, drawn his own moral, and one might or might not agree with him. But this decision, I thought, involved many things besides morality, some of them even more important. Turning to the second parable, I felt it certainly must have a moral: a man does not simply shave all his hair and cut his throat without teaching us something. Moreover, one does not write of such a man without considering the rule under which his case falls. But it seemed to me that there were so many morals—practically every sentence made a point—that I could not decide which was the right one. As for the last parable, there I did see one moral and only one; but I was so sure of it that I feared I must be overlooking something, and so my certainty was but another form of doubt. Thus I am yet to say what the moral of each parable may be.

I am not a moralist by nature. I do not begin with morality and look for a tale to clothe it—this procedure seems unnatural to me; but I cannot call it the reverse of the natural one, for the other, of beginning with a tale and drawing the moral from it, seems just

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as unnatural to me. True morality, I should think, is so simple and obvious that even a child must be aware of it, yet it is at no point apparent; it does not obtrude here rather than there, for if the whole world be moral, there is no reason why one part of it should engage the attention instead of another. Fish swim in the water, but no one says, "Look, *that* fish is swimming in the water!"

Then the parables, one, two, and three, should be sufficient to themselves without a moral—which satisfies my own requirement. But what's left over, the problem, if you will—left over, because writing itself has nothing to do with problems—is still of interest to me. If embarrassment with morality be health, I should like to sound it; if it be paralysis of the faculty, then I must know how and why I am affected. I don't know where to begin, and I doubt my own capacity for system, but I shall put down *a, b, c,* and *d,* to spare others what I can of my own confusion.

a. THE HORSE

The horse has decided that life is not worth living in his condition. He has discovered a freedom greater than it is his nature to exercise; which is to say, greater than the freedom of instinct. This very discovery discloses to him that he is not free. Why, then, here's a moral: "One may have only the freedom of his own nature." But I should say just the opposite is true: for what is freedom if we do not, in winning it, discover both the limit of our own nature and what lies beyond it? We need only indulge ourselves to be free within our own limit—but that's no problem, no freedom and no morality. The problem is rather, how shall we be free without self-indulgence? Then we must transcend our limit. But how shall we transcend it? for the limit is real. Here cuts the double edge of freedom with its terrible, excellent sharpness: one edge toward ourselves —how sharp the limit is!—and the other, more terrible, away from us—what a deep cut we have taken of the impossible! Sheathe either edge and you are defeated. Without the wound of the limit, you would cut without blood; it is idealism, in the disgraceful sense, to believe in a freedom without limit, it is unreality and cowardice. Sheathe the outer edge and you have a worse cowardice, called determinism, but actually, contentment with things as they are,

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smugness, the amoral convention. Sheathe both edges and you have dullness on your hands.

What shall our poor horse do? He has decided that life is not worth living if he cannot have the power that belongs to his freedom. This is his choice. Then is he right or wrong? I should say he was wrong. Freedom is a good in itself, even if it imposes on us a burden greater than we can bear. And life is a good in itself, it is always better to be than not to be, etc. But I might just as well say he was right, for to call life worthless in the name of freedom is the greatest dignity, as when a man says, I would rather be dead than a slave. Here we catch a whiff of the real moral atmosphere, having left the lowlands where choices are made by habit and instinct, and entered difficult country, watershed and mountain top, where all direction is down; this is the very rare air of our freedom. Here no choices are possible, here morality begins. As if to say: "Life *or* death? At this point the two are one."

But isn't there something wrong here? Don't we say that animals have always the better part of love? Our poems admire their ease. Blake in the forest and Walt Whitman in the zoo: we celebrate always the animal part. Animals in their own nature are greater than we, in so far as we share that nature. They are fiercer, wiser, more cunning, more gracious, etc. But it is because he has shared our human nature that the horse is overwhelmed by the burden; for indeed we have made pack horse of him, and it's our own burden that he must carry. The worst one can say is that he's not a real animal. But he will do to stagger under the burden; for to bear it is more than any creature can do.

It is worth noting here that the horse sees no ambiguity. If he *can* love then he *must* love; if he *does* love then Zelda *must* be desirable (it never enters his head to think otherwise). Ambiguity is itself ambiguous: some it destroys, some it saves. The soldier, who dismisses it, is saved; the horse, who cannot even recognize it, is destroyed. And we put ambiguity to good use: to be in an unclear position is sometimes the greatest advantage a man can enjoy, as when we give him the benefit of the doubt. But with the animals' simpler nature, no such refinement is possible; their advantage is never in the potentiality, always in the act. Which is why animals are ideally suited to carry our burden in parables.

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And which is all the more reason why we cannot dispute the moral that the horse has drawn from his own parable. Was he correct in his conclusion? An idle question, for how could he possibly have been wrong? If this be a moral world, then everything in it is a parable, and one need only know the subject to know the truth. Though our actions be wrong they are always exemplary, and the rule to which they belong is always right. Even if the moral cannot be stated, it is there. But isn't this the greatest burden of all?

b. THE CLERK

Morality everywhere. Don't try to advance yourself at another's expense, or even at your own. Don't be meticulous. Never weigh things too fine. The clerk's reflection on the tip, that it would have had to be more handsome than ordinary, was fatal; for a gratuity is gracious or it undoes us. In shaving, as in other acts, let well enough alone, and if hairs remain, let them stand. Or one may say, when a thing has gone well beyond a natural line, there's no use drawing an arbitrary one. And so on and so forth, a moral in every word. This puts it all very explicitly, leaving so little implicit that morality becomes trivial. And in a moral world, where everything is a parable, it is often the case that morality is trivial; the only important moral is like the clerk's last use of the razor, the stroke of death.

But whose parable is this, is it mine? If so, how do I come to write of government clerks when I am not one myself? If not, why does this parable fascinate me and horrify me (and if it does so to others, why to them)? In either case, is the bureaucratic setting incidental or necessary (it seems to me it is necessary: some things simply cannot be imagined without bureaucratic correlatives); is the sexual analogy that one can so easily devise out of the same materials, relevant or not? But is it at all important that I be able to answer these questions? Say that this parable is a construction out of known elements: can't it also be an outflowing of the unknown? Is the distinction of any consequence? For one may argue that a man without an unconscious mind—assuming that's possible—is in no way different from an ordinary man. Isn't there a point where our subtlety becomes too fine for itself, and what we write consciously, by calculation, becomes all the greater an unconscious act? I wrote this para-

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ble with its moral neither before me nor behind me; I wrote it understanding and not understanding what it means. And if I find it amusing (as, in spite of certain misgivings that I should write such things, I do) is it because I understand or do not understand what I've done?

So when the moral lies everywhere and the choice is impossible not because it is too fine (as in the first case), but too gross (as in this), it is our impulse to look beyond morality (if we can) and find some meaning greater than the one that concerns us. And greater precisely because it does not concern us. Thus, astronomers are the true moralists. But here in hand is still a human thing; the stars do not hang so close to home. What is the meaning beyond the moral? I see only that it is logical; the parable as a whole has reason in it. Not instinct, not habit, but reason informs it. Draw whatever moral you may, or submit it instead to a psychoanalyst, there's still reason to contend with and shudder at. But what becomes of morality if we shudder at reason, for isn't the moral world preeminently a rational one?

c. THE CYCLIST

Here's a perfect trifle, the poorest of the lot; yet this is the one I understand and can tell you the most about. It is a parable of the imagination and the moral—the young man is right—is that the world of the imagination is an outer world, as much a real and accomplished one as the world of valleys, hills, and mountains. We travel in it as high as we can, and there are vehicles, whatever our art, that take us there. The genius is he who travels effortlessly so long as he remains in sight; what happens thereafter, no one knows. (Ease and the capacity for taking infinite pains are one and the same thing: of course it is painful to ride up hill—yet look how he goes!) And so on and so forth. . . .

But I am so sure of all this, that I fear I must be overlooking something. Can the writers, say, be right after all? That the young man is not telling the truth, or foolishly wasting himself; that a work of the imagination is not an already created thing, but the very contrary of landscape? And then, "Mind has mountains . . . " etc.—it's no such easy ride (even as defined).

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And yet it must be so! As if to say, hell with the moral, here's one of our own. My moral is: the world of the imagination is a created, objective world. Having said which, I no longer care if it be right or wrong. (Yet, as I here stand at the threshold of *my own* parable, how can I possibly be wrong?) There is our animal nature, not yet created, in which freedom is the death of us; there is our human nature, in process of creation, where reason, our special part, can be the death of us; and there is the imagination, created, whose reasons and meanings are greater than all the others precisely because they do not concern us. Here, then, is life and—though the word does not even appear—freedom.

But this is so much moralizing—already the word has a contemptible ring! Let me say, once we enter our own parable, and our own life is perforce exemplary, we cease to take instruction from it, and the moral is not the important thing. Then it's as Pascal said, *"True morality makes light of morality. . . . To make light of philosophy is to be a true philosopher."*

d. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation is my own parable.

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Leslie Fiedler

COME BACK TO THE RAFT AG'IN, HUCK HONEY!

It is perhaps to be expected that the Negro and the homosexual should become stock literary themes, compulsive, almost mythic in their insistence, in a period when the reassertion of responsibility and of the inward meaning of failure has become again a primary concern of our literature. Their locus is, of course, discrepancy—in a culture which has no resources (no tradition of courtesy, no honored mode of cynicism) for dealing with a contradiction between principle and practice. It used once to be fashionable to think of puritanism as a force in our life encouraging hypocrisy; quite the contrary, its rigid emphasis upon the singleness of belief and action, its turning of the most prosaic areas of common life into arenas where one's state of grace is symbolically tested, confuse the outer and the inner and make among us, perhaps more strikingly than ever elsewhere, hypocrisy *visible,* visibly detestable, a cardinal sin. It is not without significance that the shrug of the shoulders (the acceptance of circumstance as a sufficient excuse, the vulgar sign of self-pardon before the inevitable lapse) seems in America an unfamiliar, an alien gesture.

And yet before the underground existence of crude homosexual love (the ultimate American epithets of contempt notoriously exploit the mechanics of such affairs), before the blatant ghettos in which the cast-off Negro conspicuously creates the gaudiness and stench that offend him, the white American must over and over make a choice between coming to uneasy terms with an institutionalized discrepancy, or formulating radically new ideologies. There are, to be sure, stop-gap devices, evasions of that final choice; not the least interesting is the special night club: the fag café, the black-and-tan joint, in which fairy or Negro exhibit their fairyness, their Negro-ness as if they were mere divertissements, gags thought up for the laughs

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and having no reality once the lights go out and the chairs are piled on the tables for the cleaning-women. In the earlier minstrel show, a negro performer was required to put on with grease paint and burnt cork the formalized mask of blackness.

The situations of the Negro and the homosexual in our society pose precisely opposite problems, or at least problems suggesting precisely opposite solutions: Our laws on homosexuality and the context of prejudice and feeling they objectify must apparently be changed to accord with a stubborn social fact, whereas it is the social fact, our overt behavior toward the Negro, that must be modified to accord with our laws and the, at least official, morality they objectify.

It is not, of course, quite so simple. There is another sense in which the fact of homosexual passion contradicts a national myth of masculine love, just as our real relationship with the Negro contradicts a myth of that relationship, and those two myths with their betrayals are, as we shall see, one.

The existence of overt homosexuality threatens to compromise an essential aspect of American sentimental life: the camaraderie of the locker-room and ball park, the good fellowship of the poker game and fishing trip, a kind of passionless passion, at once gross and delicate, homoerotic in the boy's sense, possessing an innocence above suspicion. To doubt for a moment this innocence, which can survive only as *assumed,* would destroy our stubborn belief in a relationship simple, utterly satisfying, yet immune to lust; physical as the handshake is physical, this side of copulation. The nineteenth-century myth of the Immaculate Young Girl has failed to survive in any *felt* way into our time; rather in the dirty jokes shared among men in the smoking-car, the barracks, or the dormitory there is a common male revenge against women for having flagrantly betrayed that myth, and under the revenge, there is the rather smug assumption of the chastity of the group as a masculine society. From what other source could that unexpected air of good clean fun which overhangs such sessions arise? It is this self-congratulatory buddy-buddiness, its astonishing naiveté, that breeds at once endless opportunities for inversion and the terrible reluctance to admit its existence, to surrender the last believed-in stronghold of love without passion.

It is, after all, what we know from a hundred other sources that is here verified: the regressiveness, in a technical sense, of American

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life, its implacable nostalgia for the infantile, at once wrongheaded and somehow admirable. The mythic America is boyhood—and who would dare be startled to realize that two (and the two most popular, the two most *absorbed,* I think) of the handful of great books in our native heritage are customarily to be found, illustrated, on the shelves of the Children's Library. I am referring of course to *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn,* splendidly counterpoised in their oceanic complexity and fluminal simplicity, but alike children's books, or more precisely, *boys'* books.

Among the most distinguished novelists of the American past, only Henry James escapes completely classification as a writer of juvenile classics; even Hawthorne, who did write sometimes for children, must in his most adult novels endure, though not as Mark Twain and Melville submit to, the child's perusal; a child's version of *The Scarlet Letter* would seem a rather far-fetched joke if it were not a part of our common experience. On a lower level of excellence, there are the Leatherstocking Tales of Cooper and Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast,* books read still, though almost unaccountably in Cooper's case, by boys. What do all these novels have in common?

As boys' books we would expect them shyly, guilelessly as it were, to proffer a chaste male love as the ultimate emotional experience—and this is spectacularly the case. In Dana, it is the narrator's melancholy love for the *kanaka,* Hope; in Cooper, the lifelong affection of Natty Bumpo and Chingachgook; in Melville, Ishmael's love for Queequeg; in Twain, Huck's feeling for Nigger Jim. At the focus of emotion, where we are accustomed to find in the world's great novels some heterosexual passion, be it Platonic love or adultery, seduction, rape or long-drawn-out flirtation, we come instead upon the fugitive slave and the no-account boy lying side by side on a raft borne by the endless river towards an impossible escape, or the pariah sailor waking in the tatooed arms of the brown harpooner on the verge of their impossible quest. "Aloha, aikane, aloha nui," Hope cries to the lover who prefers him above his fellow-whites; and Ishmael, in utter frankness, tells us: "Thus, then, in our heart's honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg—a cosy, loving pair." Physical it all is, certainly, yet of an ultimate innocence; there is between the lovers no sword but a child-like ignorance, as if the possibility of a fall to the carnal had not yet been discovered. Even in the *Vita Nuova* of Dante there is no vision

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of love less offensively, more unremittingly chaste; that it is not adult seems sometimes beside the point.

The tenderness of Huck's repeated loss and refinding of Jim, Ishmael's sensations as he wakes under the pressure of Queequeg's arm, the role of almost Edenic helpmate played for Bumpo by the Indian—these shape us from childhood: we have no sense of first discovering them, of having been once without them.

Of the infantile, the homoerotic aspects of these stories we are, though vaguely, aware, but it is only with an effort that we can wake to a consciousness of how, among us who at the level of adulthood find a difference in color sufficient provocation for distrust and hatred, they celebrate, all of them, the mutual love of *a white man and a colored.*

So buried at a level of acceptance which does not touch reason, so desperately repressed from overt recognition, so contrary to what is usually thought of as our ultimate level of taboo—the sense of that love can survive only in the obliquity of a symbol, persistent, archtypical, in short, as a myth: the boy's homoerotic crush, the love of the black fused at this level into a single thing.

I hope I have been using here a hopelessly abused word with some precision; by myth I mean a coherent pattern of beliefs and feelings, so widely shared at a level beneath consciousness that there exists no abstract vocabulary for representing it, and (this is perhaps another aspect of the same thing) so "sacred" that unexamined, irrational restraints inhibit any explicit analysis. Such a complex achieves a formula or pattern story, which serves both to embody it, and, at first at least, to conceal its full implications. Later the secret may be revealed, the myth (I use a single word for the formula and what is formulized) "analyzed" or "allegorically interpreted" according to the language of the day.

I find the situation we have been explicating genuinely mythic; certainly it has the concealed character of the true myth, eluding the wary pounce of Howells or of Mrs. Twain who excised from *Huckleberry Finn* the cussin' as unfit for children, but left, unperceived, a conventionally abhorrent doctrine of ideal love. Even the writers in whom we find it, attained it, in a sense, dreaming. The felt difference between *Huckleberry Finn* and Twain's other books must lie surely in the release from conscious restraint inherent in the

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author's assumption of the character of Huck; the passage in and out of darkness and river mist, the constant confusion of identities (Huck's ten or twelve names—the questions of who is the real uncle, who the true Tom), the sudden intrusions into alien violences without past or future, give the whole work for all its carefully observed detail, the texture of a dream. For *Moby Dick,* such a point need scarcely be made. Even Cooper, despite his insufferable gentlemanliness, his civilized tedium, cannot conceal from the kids who continue to read him the secret behind the overconscious, stilted prose: the childish impossible dream. D. H. Lawrence saw in him clearly the kid's Utopia: the absolute wilderness in which the stuffiness of home yields to the wigwam and "My Wife" to Chingachgook.

I do not recall ever having seen in the commentaries of the social anthropologist or psychologist an awareness of the role of this profound child's dream of love in our relation to the Negro. (I say Negro, though the beloved in the books we have mentioned is variously Indian and Hawaiian, because the Negro has become more and more exclusively for us *the* colored man, the colored man par excellence.) Trapped in what has by now become a shackling cliché: the concept of the white man's sexual envy of the Negro male, they do not sufficiently note the complementary factor of physical attraction, the mythic love of white male and black. I am deliberately ignoring here an underlying Indo-European myth of great antiquity, the Manichaean notion of an absolute Black and White, hostile yet needing each other for completion, as I ignore more recent ideologies that have nourished the view that concerns us: the Shakespearian myth of good homosexual love opposed to an evil heterosexual attachment, the Rousseauistic concept of the Noble Savage; I have tried to stay within the limits of a single unified myth, re-enforced by disparate materials.

Ishmael and Queequeg, arm in arm, about to ship out, Huck and Jim swimming beside the raft in the peaceful flux of the Mississippi,—it is the motion of water which completes the syndrome, the American dream of isolation afloat. The Negro as homoerotic lover blends with the myth of running off to sea, of running the great river down to the sea. The immensity of water defines a loneliness that demands love, its strangeness symbolizes the disavowal of the conventional that makes possible all versions of love.

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In *Two Years Before the Mast,* in *Moby Dick,* in *Huckleberry Finn* the water is there, is the very texture of the novel; the Leatherstocking Tales propose another symbol for the same meaning: the virgin forest. Notice the adjective—the virgin forest and the forever inviolable sea. It is well to remember, too, what surely must be more than a coincidence, that Cooper who could dream this myth invented the novel of the sea, wrote for the first time in history the sea-story proper. The rude pederasty of the forecastle and the Captain's cabin, celebrated in a thousand jokes, is the profanation of a dream. In a recent book of Gore Vidal's an incipient homosexual, not yet aware of the implications of his feelings, indulges in the apt reverie of running off to sea with his dearest friend. The buggery of sailors is taken for granted among us, yet it is thought of usually as an inversion forced on men by their isolation from women, though the opposite case may well be true, the isolation sought more or less consciously as an occasion for male encounters. There is a context in which the legend of the sea as escape and solace, the fixated sexuality of boys, the dark beloved are one.

In Melville and Twain at the center of our tradition, in the lesser writers at the periphery, the myth is at once formalized and perpetuated; Nigger Jim and Queequeg make concrete for us what was without them a vague pressure upon the threshold of our consciousness; the proper existence of the myth is in the realized character, who waits, as it were, only to be asked his secret. Think of Oedipus biding in silence from Sophocles to Freud.

Unwittingly we are possessed in childhood by the characters and their undiscriminated meaning, and it is difficult for us to dissociate them without a sense of disbelief. What! these household figures clues to our subtlest passions! The foreigner finds it easier to perceive the remoter significance; D. H. Lawrence saw in our classics a linked mythos of escape and immaculate male love; Lorca in *The Poet in New York* grasped instinctively the kinship of Harlem and Walt Whitman, the fairy as bard. Yet in every generation of our own writers the myth appears; in the Gothic reverie of Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms,* both elements of the syndrome are presented, though disjunctively: the boy moving between the love of a Negro maidservant and his inverted cousin.

In the myth, one notes finally, it is always in the role of outcast,

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ragged woodsman, or despised sailor (Call me Ishmael!), or unregenerate boy (Huck before the prospect of being 'sivilized' cries, "I been here before!") that we turn to the love of a colored man. But how, we must surely ask, does the vision of the white American as pariah correspond with our long-held public status: the world's beloved, the success? It is perhaps only the artist's portrayal of *himself,* the notoriously alienated writer in America, at home with such images, child of the town drunk, the survivor. But no, Ishmael is all of us, our unconfessed universal fear objectified in the writer's status as in the sailor's: that compelling anxiety, which every foreigner notes, that we may not be loved, that we are loved for our possessions and not ourselves, that we are really—*alone!* It is that underlying terror which explains our almost furtive incredulity in the face of adulation or favor, what is called (once more the happy adjective) our "boyish modesty."

Our dark-skinned beloved will take us, we assure ourselves, when we have been cut off, or have cut ourselves off from all others, without rancor or the insult of forgiveness; he will fold us in his arms saying "Honey" or "Aikane!", he will comfort us, as if our offense against him were long ago remitted, were never truly *real.* And yet we cannot really forget our guilt ever; the stories that embody the myth dramatize almost compulsively the role of the colored man as victim: Dana's Hope is shown dying of the white man's syphilis; Queequeg is portrayed as racked by fever, a pointless episode except in the light of this necessity; Cooper's Indian smolders to a hopeless old age conscious of the imminent disappearance of his race; Jim is shown loaded down with chains, weakened by the hundred torments of Tom's notion of bullyness. The immense gulf of guilt must be underlined, just as is the disparity of color (Queequeg is not merely brown but monstrously tatooed, Chingachgook is horrid with paint, Jim is shown as the Sick A-rab dyed blue), so that the final reconciliation will seem more unbelievable, more tender. The myth makes no attempt to whitewash our outrage as a fact; it portrays it as meaningless in the face of love.

There would be something insufferable, I think, in that final vision of remission if it were not for the apparent presence of a motivating anxiety, the sense always of a last chance; behind the white American's nightmare that someday, no longer tourist, inheri-

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tor, or liberator, he will be rejected, refused—he dreams of his acceptance at the breast he has most utterly offended. It is a dream so sentimental, so outrageous, so desperate that it redeems our concept of boyhood from nostalgia to tragedy.

In each generation we *play* out the impossible mythos, and we live to see our children play it, the white boy and the black we can discover wrestling affectionately on any American street, along which they will walk in adulthood, eyes averted from each other, unwilling to touch. The dream recedes; the immaculate passion and the astonishing reconciliation become a memory, and less, a regret, at last the unrecognized motifs of a child's book. "It's too good to be true, Honey," Jim says to Huck. "It's too good to be true."

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Stephen Spender

MADONNA

Below the scallop shell
Of the fanned sky
The clear girl is seated.
Her eyes like flowers
Are thought by the seed
Buried in her body.
Her flesh is a cloud
Enfolding her gold son.

The life in her life
Crouching to be born
Is head downwards
In a dark room.
Inner flesh of peace
Withdrawn from the world
And dreaming the Real,
While the abstract Furies
Hunt the cities outside.

Her heaven divides
The world into two worlds—
Of kings who bring myrrh
To worship this birth.
Or Herods whose rays
Murder in the womb
Prenatal generations
Of reincarnate earth.
Her child says: Choose!

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Newton Arvin

COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENTS

Everyone knows—we owe the knowledge to a hundred travelers and anthropologists—how intensely the "primitive man" feels on the subject of having his portrait painted or his picture taken —and how alarmingly he sometimes acts. Is it possible that such feelings survive in our civilized psyche in some unconfessed and deeply buried guise? The history of western portrait-painting since the early Renaissance would hardly suggest such a thought, and just as little would the prosperous history of the portrait photographer since the days of Daguerre and Draper. Sir James Frazer tells us that the Tepehuanes of Mexico were once panic-stricken by the prospect of having a camera turned on them, and that, when at last they agreed to pose, it was with the conviction that death or some other great evil would follow. And indeed he alleges that even in western Scotland, in the nineteenth century, there were persons who refused to have their likenesses taken in the fear that such pictures might ruin their luck or their health. Is the distance between ourselves—contemporaries of Steichen and Weston—and the Tepehuanes or the western Scots so great as we commonly imagine?

Perhaps it is, but if so it is not because we are not, in our own manner, obsessed with the idea of the portrait. The almost mysterious formulas which prescribe, in any given age, the recurrence of favorite words or images in titles, betray this fact. Everyone, surely, has observed how often the very word "portrait" or some word like it has echoed and re-echoed through the titles of our recent literature. To go, for the moment, no further backward, it has been a favorite ever since, in the early eighties, Henry James published *The Portrait of a Lady*. Walter Pater was close on James's heels, in 1887, with *Imaginary Portraits,* and then very quickly came Oscar Wilde with

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The Portrait of Mr. W. H. and of course *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Since Wilde's time we have had a novel by Ford Madox Ford entitled simply *The Portrait,* the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Mr. Eliot's poem ("Portrait of a Lady"), a poem of Ezra Pound's ("Portrait d'une femme"), Mr. Dylan Thomas's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*—and who can say how many other "portraits" and "pictures" in the titles of lesser writers than these? Does not all this suggest a singular preoccupation on our part with the "counterfeit presentment"?

For of course the titles tell by no means all the story or indeed the more interesting part of it. What is far more striking than these verbal echoes is the active, the essential, the "symbolic" role that pictures of all kinds, and portraits especially, have played in the fiction of the last century or so. The portrait that is not merely dimly evoked by a title but that, on the contrary, hangs on the wall in a frame, or is being painted by an artist on an easel, and makes its existence felt, sometimes decisively, in the tale—this is the portrait that solicits our attention here. How frequently it has figured in fiction or drama we rarely pause to reflect. A fairly recent instance for the stage, within the memory of all but the youngest theater-goers, is of course John Balderston's play of the twenties, *Berkeley Square;* and the notion for this piece, as most readers remember, was derived from a late and unfinished novel of Henry James's, *The Sense of the Past.*

No writer ever made use of this emblem more richly, more delicately, or with a finer witchery of interfused "reality" and uncanniness. Readers of James's fragmentary novel will remember the young American, a twentieth-century Man of Feeling, with a deeply imaginative "sense of the past," who falls heir to an ancestral townhouse in London and who finds there the singular portrait of a youth of George the Fourth's period—singular because the face of the young man is *turned away* from the puzzled onlooker. The thought forces itself on Ralph Pendrel that, when unobserved, the portrayed figure is quite capable of turning about and facing outward, in the familiar fashion; and indeed, as it eventuates, the youth in the picture proves to be capable of stepping bodily out of the frame itself, helping himself to a lighted candle, and coming to meet Ralph Pendrel as he returns, with his own taper, to the room in which the portrait hangs. The young man of 1820 turns out to have a passion of curiosity about

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the future which matches Ralph's own passion for the past, and the two inevitably make an exchange of epochs. In doing so, as James's notes indicate, they were only to confirm the disquieting premonitions which had visited the painter of the portrait himself.

Did ever a portrait behave so, so oddly and also so impressively, in literature before? The answer is, yes, again and again. Portraits had been behaving in this manner in European and American fiction for the better part of two centuries before James set to work on his never-to-be-completed novel. Like so many motives in literature, James's mysteriously animated portrait comes at the end of a long series, not at its beginning. A glance at a few of this ancestral portrait's own ancestors will only fortify our respect for James's art, and perhaps have a curious interest of its own.

The subject is only one aspect of a much more inclusive one, the appearance of works of art generally in literature. That is a subject which has almost literally no beginning and is not likely to have a very early end. If one cast one's net only wide enough to take in written and not oral literature, one would doubtless have to begin with the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad,* once so familiar to at least a few schoolboys; one would not be able to pass over the pictured scenes from the Trojan War, painted on the temple walls of Carthage, which move Aeneas so deeply in the first book of the *Aeneid* (*et mentem mortalia tangunt*); and so one would work one's way gradually down to our own time and to the Botticellis and the Vermeers of which Proust made such beautiful use in *Remembrance of Things Past.* It would be a question of taking in not only pictures but statues as well, statues which also come to life, like the statue in Mérimée's famous *conte, La Vénus d'Ille*—the "source" of which can be tracked down through all the winding corridors of literary history to the dusky regions of folklore.

The same thing is true even when we limit ourselves to the narrower subject of portraits; in any collection of fairy-stories or folk-tales, one is bound to stumble sooner or later on this motif—on the notion that an individual's image can, under certain circumstances, come to life, and behave in any one of various uncanny ways which suggest a magical identification with the individual himself. The portraits of the Virgin or of various saints which, in medieval folklore, are represented as weeping or bleeding or leaving their shrines, belong

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unmistakably to the primordial line of which I am speaking; they are an obvious example of what folklorists call Magic Objects, and it is only because they represent individual human beings that they interest us here so much more than the bleeding branches or the speaking reeds which belong to the same broad category.

In any case, we can hardly set out on a treasure hunt through oral and written literature for painted likenesses. I am broaching only the smaller question of portraits and their use in the fiction of the last century or two. Just when these particular works of art first made their appearance, I do not know and will not undertake to say; let us assume for convenience that at least a very early example of the Romantic Portrait is that grim likeness of Prince Manfred's grandfather which, in Horace Walpole's stagey little novel, *The Castle of Otranto,* steps down out of its frame and, to Manfred's consternation, stalks with a melancholy air out of the apartment in which it has been hanging. Whether it is really the very first of our modern line or not, Walpole's picture did surely indicate that the ancient emblem was about to take on a new life; the "Gothic" portrait had arrived on the scene, and a peculiarly modern quality of feeling, a peculiarly modern nuance of the poetic, the complex, the equivocal, was about to attach itself to the old motif.

It very soon became evident that Gothic or Romantic writers were going to find the portrait a device quite as irresistible to them as music or musical instruments. Mrs. Radcliffe's novels abound in mysterious miniatures which end by revealing unsuspected identities; there is a beautiful and sinister portrait in the famous shocker, *The Monk,* by M. G. Lewis, which becomes an emblem of sensual and demoniac beauty; and perhaps the most memorable of them all is the terrible picture with the frightening eyes which young John Melmoth, in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer,* finds hanging in his uncle's closet and burns to ashes after his uncle's death.

No one of these portraits behaves in quite what could be called a frankly magical manner; there were plenty that did—though sometimes to the effect merely of charm or comedy, as in Gautier's witty story, *Omphale,* in which the picture of a lovely eighteenth-century marchioness comes to life for the amorous benefit of a young Parisian of a later epoch. Nor does the preternatural power reside always in the painted image itself; it is sometimes a question rather of super-

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normal insight or divination on the part of the artist. What must be a rather early embodiment of this long-lived theme is one of E. T. A. Hoffmann's tales, *Doge und Dogaressa*: what happens here is that a nineteenth-century painter represents in a painting two genuinely historical personages, Marino Faliero and his young bride, and quite without consciously intending to do so, imparts to the young Dogaressa's countenance an expression which is subtly premonitory of the fate that, unbeknown to the artist, did in fact befall her. The painting has revealed much more of the truth than the painter himself, in any literal sense, could have "known."

Portraits which take on a magical animation, portraits which speak of an otherwise unsuspected reality—these are two of the kinds of portraits which adorn the walls of Romantic fiction; a third is the portrait which mysteriously exercises a baleful and even a fatal influence either on the painter himself or on the sitter or on some third personage who falls under its spell. There can be few more intense expressions of this theme than a story of Gogol's called simply "The Portrait," a story in which a young painter's career is ravaged and wrecked by the mere possession of a portrait—for its subject, an evil old money-lender, is a symbol of low ambition and worldly avarice.

How often the emblem may appear in the minor Russian writers I cannot say; it was certainly a favorite with our own Gothic and romantic writers in America. Everyone will recall the young painter in Poe's tale, "The Oval Portrait," who, in a "dark high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead," paints a portrait of his young and lovely bride, which, stroke by stroke as he paints it, steals from the girl a portion of her vitality, so that at the moment when it is finished, she herself expires, having imparted to the picture the substance of her life. Like the picture of Dorian Gray—the most celebrated of all these works of art—this portrait of Poe's is a kind of inverse example of what folklorists call the Life-Token, the magic object which is vitally identified with an individual, so that it flourishes with his health and withers with his illness and dies with his death; which may even *bring on* his death if it is blighted or cut down.

The American writer for whom, even more than for James, the portrait was to be highly characteristic, was Hawthorne; but

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Melville, too, rather unexpectedly, turns up with a very curious example in *Pierre*. There is a likeness in Hawthorne's tale, "The Prophetic Pictures," which, in the style of Hoffmann's, anticipates more of the tragic future than even the painter himself could rationally have foreseen; and in "Edward Randolph's Portrait" the picture of the wicked governor is "rumored" to have "started from the wall, and spoken face to face" with one of his successors at a crisis in the colony's history. Most familiarly of all, in *The House of the Seven Gables,* the grim old seventeenth-century portrait of Colonel Pyncheon, hanging on the wall of the room in which he died, "seemed to symbolize an evil influence, and so darkly to mingle the shadow of [its] presence with the sunshine of the passing hour, that no good thoughts or purposes could ever spring up and blossom there." In *Pierre* the so-called "chair portrait," a likeness of Pierre's father as a youth, "seems to say" a whole series of things to Pierre as he sits gazing at it in the little room where, at his mother's insistence, he has hung it out of the way; there "seems" to lurk "some mystical intelligence and vitality" in it; and when Pierre sets fire to it—disenchanted as he is about his father—it stares tormentedly at him in beseeching horror. It is an all but literally animated portrait, and it plays a conspicuous role in this somewhat Radcliffean novel.

Such are a few of the most striking and memorable likenesses among the many in which modern fiction, from Horace Walpole to Henry James, has abounded. The chances are, I suspect, that with the revival of something like the Gothic manner in our fiction, the old symbol will reappear, from time to time, in a fresh and unhackneyed embodiment. Meanwhile, one cannot help wondering why it has recurred so frequently as it has already done, and just what the secret is not only of its curious beauty but of its troublous, equivocal effect upon the fancy. For certainly, in the hands of a genuinely imaginative writer, a portrait that behaves as if it were a living man or woman ceases to be a mere pleasing work of the pictorial art; it troubles us with a sense that the ordinary limits of conscious and rational experience have been well overpassed; that some deeper and darker levels of existence have been penetrated, and their mysterious waters stirred.

Naturally, as I need not say, every appearance of an emblem like this, in serious writing, is in a certain sense unique, and no in-

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genious interpretation will fit every case like a glove. The chances are, nevertheless, that a common strand, however slight it may be, will run through and unite a hundred appearances of such an obsessive symbol as this has proved to be; and here, I believe, we have a clue to that common strand in Freud's remarkable essay on "The Uncanny." The point of this essay is that the word "uncanny" does not apply to all frightening things whatever, but only to the kind of things that not only frighten us but carry us back to something long known to us, something once familiar but "forgotten" with the lapse of time, buried below the drifting accumulations of later experience, or actually repressed by an inner censor which cannot allow them to obtrude into consciousness directly. Infantile wishes and fears are among these forgotten things, but so, too, according to Freud, are all those primitive beliefs, superstitions, and terrors which civilized men imagine themselves long since to have surmounted, but which lurk nevertheless in the obscure recesses of the psyche; beliefs which, though they may never emerge into the conscious daylight, are always with us, and can always be evoked, however disguised, by the imagery of a poem or a tale.

If Freud is right, then the uncanniness of the animated portrait is an admirable case in point. For certainly no primitive conviction could be deeper-rooted or more widespread than the "superstition" that lies in ambush just below the rich and dusky literary surface we have been examining. It is the superstition I began by alluding to. Primitive people, almost universally, are said to believe that every individual has a soul, but that this soul is by no means an impalpable and, as we should say, spiritual entity; it is a very palpable and substantial thing, a tiny man within a man, which resembles the individual himself in everything but its size, and in sleep or trance or illness, and of course in death, can take its leave of the body. This is the Separable Soul of anthropological lore, and belief in it accounts for a thousand fears of which primitive man is a victim; for of course if the soul can detach itself from the body, or be malignantly detached from it, the direst results may follow. It may fail to get back into the body when the man awakes; it may fall into the hands of enemies; it may sicken and die. And all these dangers are multiplied and intensified by the equally well-established "fact" that a man's shadow, his reflection, his effigy, or portrait may all be identified with his

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soul—separable from him in the same way and exposed to all the same risks and terrors.

No wonder primitive men attempt to defend their shadows against being trodden on or struck; no wonder they avoid gazing at their own reflections in pools and mirrors; no wonder they threaten and sometimes assault the civilized visitors who try to paint their portraits or take their pictures with cameras. And perhaps it is not surprising that vestiges of these beliefs have survived among the peasantry of Europe and in remote corners of America even into our own time. Nor is it odd that the Gothic, the Romantic imagination, which re-evoked and (so to say) transliterated so much of the imagery of folklore, should have found itself peculiarly captivated by the symbol of the portrait—the symbol that fused in one whole the beauty and the grace of the civilized aesthetic and the darkness, the fearfulness, the primordial anxieties of an immemorial conviction. We literate moderns have no conscious belief whatever in a Separable Soul; most of us do not even know that our forebears once had such a belief; but the notion is by no means so far behind us as we should like to suppose. It joins hands, moreover, with an awareness which each of us does have in some degree or other, the awareness that our individuality is very far from being the simple unity it superficially appears to be, that just below the surface we are divided, confused, multifarious, and discordant, and that we do indeed have other selves, if not separable selves, besides the self in whose name we legally function. The uncanny ambiguousness of being an individual—the sense of this is a sense which, on the irrational level, primitive man and modern man share between them, and for both of them it is a perplexity and a source of pain. Of this perilous dualism or multiplicity the romantic portrait is an admirable symbol.

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ON CRITICS AND GREENBERG: A COMMUNICATION

Why is it that America, despite considerable creative vigor and an unusual curiosity about painting, has never produced a reputable art critic? The situation deserves to be investigated.

In Paris there has long been a tradition of avant-garde writing on cultural subjects. It has depended, not so much on giving out random opinions and evaluations, as on following an artist's development and meeting him on his own terms. To critics of this type, if it were Cubism in which they happened to be interested, it would not be of prime importance whether the Cubists were necessarily as "great" as Seurat, whether anybody at all could equal the best of other cultures, or any such hazardous judgments; for them it was no more fatal for Picasso to imitate Lautrec than it was for Veronese to imitate Titian; they would explore what appealed to them and present it to the public as best they could. Of course I do not overlook the many ignorant and mistaken columnists who clutter the Paris scene as noisily as here; however, there always seemed to be a few* who could get their fingers into the subject, and who acquired an eye for quality as well.

Unhappily the New York periodicals (and this goes for London, too) have never offered anything comparable; even in the magazines of intellectual standards one encounters only capricious snap-judgments, and a complete absence of instinct for pictorial structure. The approach —completely irresponsible as to accuracy or taste—has been with us so long that we might say that it amounts to a tradition.

It is against such a background that we approach the writing of Clement Greenberg. Greenberg offers a peculiar problem for the progressive artist. He has for some years recognized that modern painting

* It is encouraging to remark that there are again several names, new since the War—Degand, Marchand, Vrinat, Estienne, Descargues—affixed during recent months to important articles on the younger abstract painters.

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was being done in America; he has exposed officialdom at times when exposure was imperative; one has instinctively felt that he would line up on the side of right. In the face of this it may seem ungracious to infer that his aesthetic appraisals usually manage to be wrong. However, it must be understood that knowingly-presented superficialities can confuse the issue even more than the obvious ignorance of the journalists. And worst of all, the artists, upon whom the avant-garde critic depends for his own development, are unable to help him out much either; as an example, when Greenberg's truly disgraceful report on American art (in *Horizon*) was ridiculed by *Time*—for all the wrong reasons of course—no one felt obliged to defend it.

"The Decline of Cubism" (March PR) comes near to being a typical example of that irresponsible criticism we have been discussing. One must stretch a point to call it criticism at all—rather it is an appraisal-sheet built around a thesis. So deftly and inaccurately are the appraisals contrived that one suspects the thesis of having been the starting-point—especially as several names that do not follow the pattern get left off the lists entirely. The field of contemporary art is given the semblance of a tournament. Umpire Greenberg charts the last rounds somewhat as follows: the expected champions (Picasso, Braque, Arp, etc.) have lost their punch, and no new blood is coming along—so to everyone's surprise, a couple of Old Timers (Matisse, Bonnard), who have been relying all these years on poky lobs and drop shots rather than spectacular rushes to the net, were the ones to reach the finals after all. I do not feel that anything as elusive as the ultimate values of contemporary art can be graded as simply as this, certainly not without considerable substantiation. And such a prearranged result might prove highly irritating to a different referee, who thought he saw Matisse pass out of the tournament in love sets around 1917.*

It would have been rewarding if Greenberg had indicated *in what ways* the works of our losers have declined since the thirties. What he has cited for us are the external events that *account for* a decline already presupposed. And if he had been clearer on this point I think his thesis might have been undermined at the start.

To clarify this point I must pass on to the next one, which discloses Greenberg in the act of lumping together Cubism and Abstract art.

* I hope that it will be understood that my distaste for the recent "supreme achievements" which Greenberg credits to Matisse and Bonnard is on the grounds of *quality,* and *not* because I find them insufficiently abstract. While speaking of quality, for the critical booby prize of 1948 I should like to submit Greenberg's statement that Beckmann is painting better than Picasso today!

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Now this is a very serious error, for they differ in a quite fundamental respect. It need scarcely be pointed out that all Cubist paintings were projected as renditions of objects; in a given period the figures might be broken into fragments, in another flattened across the plane, at times all but obliterated through the excessive emphasis on structural symbols. It is often forgotten that they retain the old chiaroscuro symbols for the rendition of objects—high lights, shadows, and dark-markings to inscribe the contours. Even in the flattest Cubist paintings, the image (to borrow the Whistlerian phrase) is "behind the frame." The "window-conception" remains, even if it is a window with the shutters closed. Not by chance has it often been noted that pictures by Picasso and Braque show up to greatest advantage in Louis XV frames.

Contemporary abstract painting spearheads a revolt against such a concept. With recognizable objects removed from a painting, surprising changes in scale and space relations become evident; and most significant of all, the painting, instead of being a window bordered by a frame, becomes an object in itself. The frame acts no longer as a window sash but becomes an integral part, sometimes even thrusts the surface forward. Abstraction resurrects the direct impulse—seemingly lost for centuries—that aims for the "beautiful object"; perhaps it is closer to the vases of antiquity than to the accepted idea of what a painting should be.

There has for some time been a rivalry in Paris, of which Greenberg shows no sign of being aware. Abstraction has long been excoriated by the Cubists, whereas the worst that an Abstractionist can say of one of his fellows is that he is "stuck in Cubism." In such judgments there is of course an obvious danger in becoming too didactic; there are no precise boundaries for Abstraction, or anything else in art. I merely indicate the characteristics of different trends. While exploring the new fields few artists restrict themselves to a single avenue of approach; many who have embarked on complete abstraction later incorporate Cubist elements and many other things as well; and their works become enriched by their so doing. The districts that have been opened up are very vast, and far from being in the "exhaustion-crisis" stage they are absolutely in their infancy.

The most challenging portion of the Greenberg article was for me that in which he presents another of his lists (again offered without substantiation)—this time the "best" of the younger generation of French painters. Where did he ever get such a list? Perhaps from the Whitney Museum, perhaps from itinerant dealers; in either case he should have known better. I agree with him that all the artists on his list work

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within Cubism,* but there are many artists in Paris today of far greater attainments than any of these, and who are not "stuck in Cubism" at all. Hartung, Magnelli, Deyrolle, Domela, Schneider, Lapicque, Richard are a few of the younger generation that are doing works of a quite different character. And Jean Arp—far from being the exhausted Cubist disciple that Greenberg would have him—is realizing impressive work in many fields, no one of which retains suggestions of the Cubist approach.

We are now in a position to return to Greenberg's main thesis, that in times of disaster the radical artists lose their nerve, and through demoralization become less radical. I think that this connection between nerve and great painting may be a bit exaggerated; all of which is neither here nor there, as Picasso's latest works I find "nervy" to the point of megalomania. What is now happening to Picasso's painting I am sure would have happened under any circumstances. He has felt his genius dissipated through so many styles, each realized separately; so he has now reached a stage (he has reached it before) when he will join everything together into a series of wallops. In an artist of such disparate attainments this is a very tall order indeed. So much has been accumulated that the final works lack coordination and unity of spirit; and the constant emphasis on power often results in highly questionable taste. Abstraction might have tightened the structure and thus made it credible, but Picasso's whole background made such a step uncongenial. However, it is too early to count him out of the tournament. Not infrequently an artist has lost his sense of quality and still pulled together at the end; Corot offers a conspicuous example. I think Léger (who used to be a little short on quality anyway when placed with the others) may be giving us an instance at the moment; he has shown signs of finding himself again since his return to France. Surely it is on quality that artists get judged in the end, and not on their innovations.

I have indicated that abstraction has marked an attempt at depersonalization, and opposes the excessive personality-loving currents long inherent in Western art. It was interesting to hear Arp mention this a few months ago: "I don't want to be *great*—there are too many forces throughout the world today that are *great*." This was not spoken in modesty; it merely represents a new relation between the artist and his work; we do not need that competition for omnipotence which the critics are so intent upon grading, only an impulse that can achieve

* It might be noted here that the American painters whom Greenberg occasionally favors, similarly work "behind the frame."

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distinction and sensibility in a fragment. Perhaps the anonymous master-craftsmen will be found again who once produced temples and cathedrals; strangely enough they are often considered the greatest of all in the end.

George L. K. Morris

REPLY

As far as I can tell, Mr. Morris' main complaint is about my taste, and all the rest is *his* taste, about which I myself complain in turn. If I saw eye to eye with Mr. Morris, I do not think he would mind so much that I hand out marks to the class instead of writing appreciative blurbs as they do in France (does he really want that kind of kibitzing?). In arguing differences of taste it is almost impossible to say more than *tu quoque,* and I am given scant opportunity for even that, since Mr. Morris does not mention any of the American artists he—I assume—feels I neglected in my *Horizon* piece, and I am insufficiently acquainted with the Paris painters he lists (though on the basis of the little I have seen of Hartung, Domela, Magnelli, and Lapicque, I would hazard that most of his swans are rather feeble geese).

Nevertheless, Mr. Morris' attack is serious, well written, and sincere, and I must do him the courtesy of answering him, especially since his lecture on the differences between Cubism and abstract art embodies a fallacy that may mislead the unwary.

Matisse passed "out of the tournament in love sets around 1917." I feel that anyone with a real "instinct for pictorial structure" would have been unable to write that. This is what happens when literal a priori dogmas about the historically necessary are consulted instead of the pleasure and exaltation to be experienced from painting. Historical necessity does operate, but not with the consistency here expected of it. Matisse's "Woman before an Aquarium" of 1924 and "Lemons on a

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Pewter Plate" of 1927 (both to be seen at the Philadelphia Museum of Art's recent large retrospective show of Matisse's paintings, drawings, and sculpture) are painted in a style whose elements were formed by 1907; yet who with a real sensitivity to painting could say they are intrinsically inferior as art to the much more historically important pictures Mondrian and Picasso were turning out around the same time?

"It would have been rewarding if Greenberg had indicated *in what ways* the works of [Picasso, Braque, Arp] . . . have declined since the thirties." Let me be brief. Picasso: insensitive and disruptive color, arbitrary space-handling, literary distortions that lack plastic justification, forced emotion, bombast, attempts (which seem motivated only by a kind of despair) to demonstrate his prowess in all departments of painting (the nerviness shown here is histrionic and old-fashioned). Braque: a growing aimlessness (at least until 1939), repetitiousness and flaccidity of design, virtuosic color, lack of real matter. Arp: chronic poverty of means and ideas (see his monotonous and empty sculpture of the thirties). The trouble with all three artists is that they no longer keep on re-creating the styles they work in: they simply work inside them—something that Matisse even at his most perfunctory does not do, though he does, I will admit, tend to relax his ambition dangerously. All this is not to say that Picasso and Braque still do not produce very good pictures from time to time; it is to say, however, that the general level of their performances has declined below that of Matisse's.

But aesthetic judgments cannot be probatively demonstrated in words, and I beg to be excused from the rest of this futile chore.

The difference between Cubism and Abstract art is another matter, one of description rather than judgment, and I find Mr. Morris' description superficial in its failure to make distinctions within Cubism itself. "Even in the flattest Cubist paintings, the image . . . is 'behind the frame'." It was of the essence of Cubism after its initial stage to situate the image or rather the pictorial complex, *ambiguously*, leaving the eye to doubt whether it came forward or receded. But the ambiguity itself was weighted, and its inherent, irrevocable (and historical) tendency was to drive the picture plane forward so that it became identical with the physical surface of the canvas itself. This tendency makes itself very evident in Picasso's and Braque's first collages in 1911. By 1913, when Picasso painted his "Card Player" (in the Museum of Modern Art), the "image" had come flush with the frame, where it remained, with a few exceptions, during the rest of classical Cubism's life. As a matter of fact, in such a collage as Picasso's oval "Still Life" of 1912 (in the

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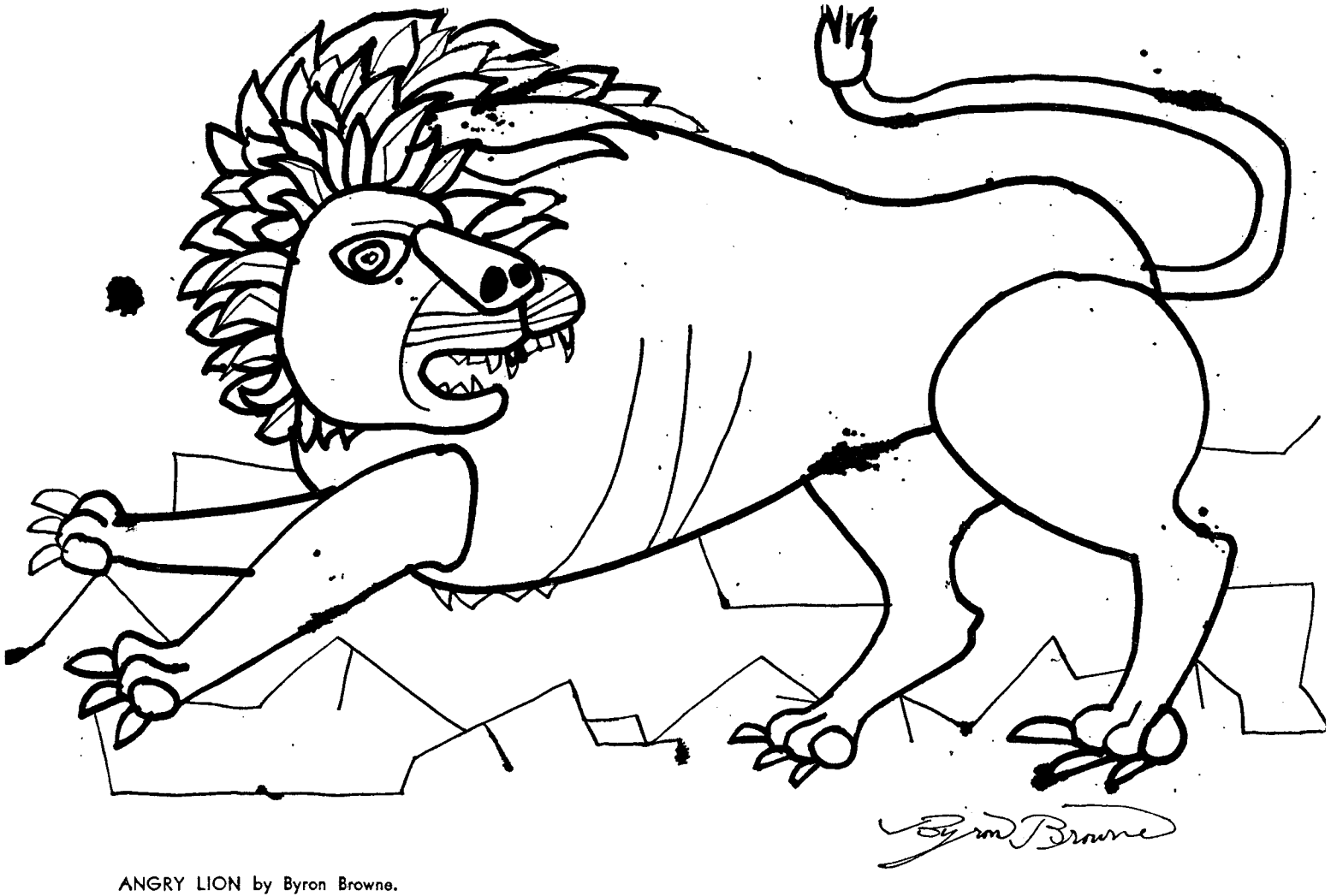

ANGRY LION by Byron Browne.

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Arensberg Collection) the emphasis with which the central forms are thrust toward the spectator is such that only bas-relief could exceed it. It is rash enough to say that most of Picasso's and Braque's Cubist paintings of 1911 and 1912 stay inside the illusion of the third dimension, but it would be downright absurd to say that of all but a few of their Cubist pictures in the years immediately after 1913, no matter how well they look in Louis XV frames. As for chiaroscuro—in the later stages of Cubism its "symbols" (shading, modeling, dark-markings) are used for the sake of abstract structure and decoration and are so divorced from their native function of depicting volume and depth that it makes no difference whatsoever whether a recognizable object is involved or not.

It belongs to the importance of Cubism, to that which makes it the most epochal school of painting since the Renaissance, that it conclusively liquidated the illusion of the third dimension. It did not have to wait for Malevitch or Mondrian to do that. Pre-figuring the furthest extremes of abstract art in our time, Picasso as a Cubist already contained everything that abstract art has since made obvious. Far from revolting against Cubism and its supposed behind-the-frameness, abstract art, in so far as it is successful (and this includes that particularly flat and simplified painting to which Mr. Morris reserves the appellation of Abstract art), takes from Cubism its cue, inspiration, and total sense of the medium. The main reason why the Kandinsky or "non-objective" school is so lacking in quality is because it is the one section of abstract art that has in fact revolted against Cubism and, abandoning the Cubist conception of the integrity of the physical picture plane, retreated to a disguised academicism. (Not that there is not something faintly academic about the way in which the Abstract art Mr. Morris upholds stays rigidly inside the state of mind of classical Cubism. And not that the French painters, aside from Dubuffet, whom I listed originally, and who cling more closely to Cubism's canon of forms than do Mr. Morris' friends, are not even more academic. But that, precisely, was one of the implicit points of my article.)

To return in closing to the Matisse-Picasso controversy, I should like to make it clear that I do not consider Matisse as important an innovator as Picasso, but I do think him a better and much more sustained painter. The Philadelphia show, as uneven as it was, made that clear, I believe. (I am told that the Philadelphia Museum was unable to obtain for its show many of the French master's most important works, particularly for the period since 1920.)

P.S. Mr. Morris did have a right to complain, perhaps, about my failure to make sufficiently clear the sense in which I used the term

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Cubism as the name of a tradition. I should have distinguished more explicitly between classical Cubism as a specific style and Cubism as a tradition. Nevertheless, I believe that in the eyes of the future their differences will seem much less pronounced even than they do now.

Clement Greenberg

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Sidney Hook

MR. TOYNBEE'S CITY OF GOD

One of the noteworthy things about Toynbee's *A Study of History* is the uncritical character of its reception in England and the United States. The explanation may simply be that it has been more widely bought than read. But even among those who give evidence of having read it, few have been able to move from under its overwhelming bulk and survey it as a whole. And yet despite its many praiseworthy adornments, never has such an imposing architectonic synthesis rested on such spindly theoretical foundations. In comparison Spengler's fancy-ridden *Decline of the West* is a model of solidity.

As if to shock his readers into reappraising his as yet uncompleted magnum opus, Toynbee now publishes *Civilization on Trial**—a slight book of essays in which he discusses the important issues of our own civilization *in extremis,* and reaffirms more boldly than ever the theological assumptions that underlie his historical writing. One turns eagerly to its pages to discover what the remarkably learned historian and analyst of all the great cultures of the past has to say about the problems to which *we* must make a successful response or perish—the unification of Europe, the crusade of Soviet Communism against the West, control of economic and scientific technology, a viable form of international government. The keener the anticipation, the greater the sense of dismay with which one reads these irrelevant and graceful commonplaces that do not rise, except in some erudite asides, above the level of a good newspaper editorial.

The explanation can be found in Mr. Toynbee's own explanatory categories and in the absence of any verifiable hypothesis about the nature of the historical process. His impressive achievement is to have transcended Augustine's parochial conception of human history and embraced all the known cultures in his historical ken. But he has retained almost in its entirety the whole set of Augustine's parochial theological

* Oxford. $3.50.

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dogmas in terms of which he attempts to decipher the meaning of human history. Because he has widened the range of his historical inquiries he deludes himself into believing that his approach is more empirical than that of Spengler. It is only more Christian.

Toynbee is writing history fundamentally as a poet and moralist and not as a scientific historian. When he writes illuminatingly about the past, as he often does, it is for the same reason that we find Dante and Santayana suggestive in their historical judgments. The sense of significance which the reader finds in *A Study of History* arises from Toynbee's genuine psychological and moral insights which are completely independent of his evangelism. For example, the whole pattern of challenge-response and ever-differentiated response to fresh challenges which Toynbee presents as the key to the growth of civilizations is a partial *psychological* truth which enables us to distinguish between individuals who can cope with a changing environment and those who cannot. Applied to cultures it is a convenient metaphor that conveys an edifying moral truth and enhances our awareness of what we already know, viz., that the successful life is a continuous succession of problems met and solved. Unless we can define what constitutes a successful response, unless we can say in advance what kind of unsuccessful response to what kind of problem spells disaster for a culture, unless we can formulate a hypothesis concerning the determinate conditions under which a creative response will or will not be made, we have hardly made a beginning towards a scientific study of the rise, growth, and decline of cultures. It may be that we do not know enough to speak confidently about laws that hold for cultures as a whole. But we do not know more when we resort to myths or to capricious intrusions of the creative spirit to account for what at the moment we cannot explain.

One might start with quite another psychological or biological insight, and with Toynbee's erudition one could compose, out of selected historical materials, an entirely different interpretation of cultural development and decline. For example, Charles Peirce says somewhere that all development takes place through the limitation of original possibilities. Goethe's remark that the secret of all great achievement is limitation and Veblen's observations about the frustrations of trained incapacity by overspecialization are corollaries. With Toynbee's imaginative and dramatic flair one could find myriads of historical illustrations of these principles. Our own problems could be presented in a way to disclose the operation of these "laws." We could "prove" that the disastrous consequences of over-reaching power always result from an attempt to realize incompatible possibilities. Our whole account could

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serve as an argument for a kind of Leibnitzian cultural pluralism or "compossibility" in international affairs. Provided, of course, we already believed in it.

To take this as anything more than a poetic or prophetic excursion in order to amplify the *meaning* of a vision is to confuse historical illustration with historical proof. Toynbee systematically falls into this confusion wherever he ventures beyond the discussion of a specific problem such as, say, why Monophysite Christianity survived in Abyssinia. Before a historical illustration can be considered part of a historical proof of the principle it illustrates, it must be shown that it follows logically from the principle and that alternative principles cannot explain it more adequately. And if ever the truth of the illustration is successfully challenged, the validity of the principle itself must henceforth be questioned. Mr. Toynbee's empirical "laws," however, are so vague that it is hard to see what kind of empirical evidence could possibly refute them. Many of the historical illustrations he cites could have been otherwise and still serve as historical illustrations of the thesis, e.g., that "schism in the soul" is at the heart of the "schism in the body social" which is a necessary phase of social disintegration. He nowhere comes to grips with the view that the spiritual crisis of our time, as of other times, is a consequence of profound dislocations in economic and social institutions, and that the cure of the business cycle will affect the incidence of neurotic anxieties over salvation much more decisively than spiritual therapy will affect the business cycle.

Toynbee's conception of historical proof, and of the truths it can establish, is expressed in one of the most revealing sentences any historian has ever written: "Christians believe—*and a study of History assuredly proves them right*—that . . . the brotherhood of Man is impossible for Man to achieve in any other way than by enrolling himself as a citizen of a *Civitas Dei* which transcends the human world and has God himself for its King." (*A Study of History,* Vol. V, p. 585, my italics, cf. also Vol. VI, p. 167.) If History can prove that, it can prove anything. Note that Mr. Toynbee is ostensibly not writing the quoted lines as a Christian but dissociates himself for the moment from Christians as an objective historian, who adds his testimony to theirs. It is not surprising therefore that hard upon this he proclaims that anyone aware of what the study of history proves "will feel certain *a priori*" that Marxism or any form of socialism which is not Christian is bound to fail. What is surprising is that on the basis of the failures in the past a self-proclaimed empirical historian should be so confident about the *only* way the brotherhood of man can be reached in the future. And no less surprising,

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all the historical evidence is blandly ignored which shows that in those communities, like thirteenth-century Christendom, where men have come closest to universal citizenship in the City of God, they suffered more torture, exploitation, terror, and wars of extermination than in most other communities before or since.

The great merit of Mr. Toynbee's new book is that it makes his theological assumptions so explicit that they cannot be dismissed by reader or critic as a quaint anachronism. His honest self-portraiture shows how focal they are to his reading of history and at the same time how cruelly deceived he is in his notions that they are supported by an empirical analysis of the facts of the past, or that they support in any way the concrete proposals he makes to his fellow-men in the present.

The following are among the more modest of Mr. Toynbee's theological beliefs. Civilization has a goal. The goal is "the communion of saints on earth." "No known civilization has ever reached the goal of civilization yet." Only a truly Christian civilization based not merely on the brotherhood of man but on "the Christian doctrine of the Trinity" can realize the goal of history. The community of saints on earth is not the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. For the tincture of original sin will always cling to imperfect creatures; that is why the church, even when it triumphs over all secular institutions, will have to stand forth "armed with the spear of the Mass, the shield of the Hierarchy, and the helmet of the Papacy." "On this showing, the victorious Church Militant on Earth will be a province of the Kingdom of God. . . . " Even before that blessed victory, "the state of eternal felicity in the other world" can be won by Christian souls in this one. Indeed, "the Christian soul can attain, while still on earth, a greater measure of man's greatest good than can be attained by any pagan soul in this earthly stage of its existence."

One could have foretold on the strength of these beliefs why Mr. Toynbee would find psychologically plausible, in advance of his study of history, two further propositions which have a familiar ring. First, that Western civilization took the path of disintegration, not only spiritual but social and economic, when it surrendered its Christian faith for secularism, humanism, and naturalism. And second, that social welfare and progress can be most effectively achieved only through the "replacement of the mundane civilizations by the world-wide and enduring reign of the Church Militant on Earth."

It does not seem to have suggested itself to Mr. Toynbee that insofar as he is interested in the brotherhood of man, democracy, peace,

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cooperation, economic security, all of this theological baggage is completely superfluous. For not a single one of the concrete proposals he makes for social change follows from his theological assumptions. The latter, whether true, false, or meaningless, are compatible with any state of social affairs. As a decisive test of this let us take Mr. Toynbee's recommendations in answer to his own question: "What shall we do to be saved?" He replies: "In politics, establish a constitutional cooperative system of world government [through the U.N.]. In economics, find working compromises between free enterprise and socialism."

Precisely from what theological assumptions do these—or any other—political and economic directives necessarily follow? What dogmas of Christianity are incompatible with free enterprise or with collectivism or with the varied alternatives to constitutional world government? What could be clearer than that Mr. Toynbee's theology is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for his own proposals for a better world? Not necessary because many non-Christian Chinese, Hindoo, Moslem, and Jewish public figures advocate them just as firmly as Mr. Toynbee. Not sufficient because many of Mr. Toynbee's co-religionists, whose theological sincerity and orthodoxy he would be the last to dispute, are bitterly opposed to them.

The point is very elementary but its implications have such a devastating significance for Mr. Toynbee's view on the relation between theology, the good life, and world order that it is necessary to underscore it. Once it is firmly grasped, the utter irrelevance of religious revivalism for any kind of social reform becomes apparent. We will then be free to explore the mischievous psychological and political consequences of insisting upon a return to religious foundations as a prerequisite to social reform. And by religion I mean here what Mr. Toynbee and most people who have called themselves religious mean—belief in theological dogmas as revealed to an authoritative church.

Some may feel that Mr. Toynbee, whose piety and good will are deeper than his theological acumen, is a weak representative of the general position. Consider for the moment, then, the case of M. Maritain whose apologetics for the Christian basis of politics and peace does not lack subtlety. In one of his books on scholasticism and politics, M. Maritain develops the importance for human society of the theological distinction between "the individual" and "the person." In the course of his analysis he relates, not without a certain sly satisfaction at the benefits conferred by a Catholic education, a story of a visit paid by Georges Duhamel, François Mauriac, and himself to Dr. Salazar, the philosopher-dictator of Portugal:

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Duhamel, who is a confirmed individualist, asked how could a dictatorship—even of a non-totalitarian type—be combined with the free development of individual beings, which alone makes human life tolerable. "Ah," answered Dr. Salazar, "in order to explain this to you, I would have to speak of the distinction between the individual and the person." Mauriac fully enjoyed this philosophical answer, addressed by a dictator to a novelist.

Here is not the place to go into the niceties of the distinction. Briefly the individual is man as a natural organism whose existence is contingent on the behavior of a material system in space and time: while the person "subsists entirely in the very subsistence of his spiritual soul." The point of the story is that M. Maritain, accepting the distinction made by Dr. Salazar, disagrees with him about its compatibility with dictatorship. M. Maritain is a democrat; Dr. Salazar decidedly is not. Yet they both believe in the intrinsic dignity of the subsistent person. *But conceived in their terms there is no known logic by which it can be established that such persons require one or another form of political life for their development.* It is highly significant that M. Maritain is careful not to charge Dr. Salazar with being a bad Catholic or tax him with inconsistency. Yet this is what he should have done if the transcendental dogmas of Catholic theology necessitate belief in the democratic society rather than in the hierarchical corporative state.

Since Mr. Toynbee is not a theologian one would gladly overlook a certain fuzziness in his discussion of these matters despite his insistence upon their central importance. But one cannot overlook what must be called his theological imperialism. For that is what it means to say that there is little hope that constitutional world government and peace can be established until the peoples of this planet, or their regimes, accept both the theology and the authority of the Church Militant upon earth. As if it were not sufficiently difficult to win people of different religious and political faiths to agreement on empirical matters necessary to insure their survival as well as the survival of their different faiths! Mr. Toynbee would add to our tasks the conversion of all the peoples of the world to one parochial variant of one religion, universal in intent, but parochial in origin, organization, and dogma. But can we dismiss so easily the evidence that for all their religious differences many groups at different times have found it possible to work out a viable civic life together *without* agreement on first or last things?

If Mr. Toynbee has seriously explored any other way of solving our problems save by "enrolling ourselves as citizens of a *Civitas Dei* of which Christ Crucified is King," there is no evidence of it. The nearest he comes to it is in his discussion of what he characterizes as "a purely this-worldly view," which for him embraces every variety of secularism,

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humanism, and naturalism. "On this view," he writes, "the individual human being is nothing but [*sic!*] a part of the society of which he is a member. The individual exists for society, not society for the individual." And so on in a succession of horrendous *non sequiturs*. The upshot of his remarks is that the this-worldly view culminates in totalitarianism to which the only genuine alternative is Christian supernaturalism. To this end he is compelled to depict the system of pagan superstition, which Christianity overthrew, as this-worldly in outlook. Nothing could be more mistaken. The triumph of Christian over classical culture was not a triumph of other-worldliness over secularism but rather a triumph of one species of other-worldliness over another, of one mystical religion over a series of magical cults with mysteries imaginatively less adequate. We are dealing here not with contradictory beliefs but with contraries: both could not be true, but from the point of view of a genuine this-worldliness, both would be considered false.

This-worldliness in philosophy does not entail the belief that the human being is *nothing but* a physicochemical system, or *nothing but* a part of society, as Mr. Toynbee would have it. It recognizes the presence of whatever distinctive human qualities emerge in experience, insisting only that these qualities modify organisms which have natural histories. It rejects not only Mr. Toynbee's transcendental myths—when they can be given a determinate meaning—as false but also the syntactical nonsense about individuals existing *for* society. Individuals exist *in* societies but only *for* other individual beings or for themselves. They serve their own purposes and interests or other people's purposes and interests—sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. The sense behind the nonsense of the phrase "existing *for* society" is that it makes it easier for some individuals to impose their purposes upon others, whether the social institutions in question are the Party, the State, or the Church. Because secularism refuses to worship Christ Crucified as King, although prepared to learn from him as a man of great but not perfect moral vision, it need not worship as divine either the Roman Emperor or Stalin and Hitler. Yet the assumption that if one does not worship God one must worship some man as God is central to Mr. Toynbee's position.

The basic form of other-worldliness is the fetishism of abstractions. Such fetishism may be clothed in the language of secularism as well as that of religion. A genuine this-worldly philosophy, on the contrary, far from worshipping abstractions uses them to understand and control the problems of human existence. It does not bow down to institutions of the visible or invisible Kingdom but evaluates them only as instruments

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for the enrichment of human experience, whose centers and carriers are always persons. Its data in any culture are the needs, as well as the limitations, of human natures as they have developed in history, the possibilities of material and social production, and the values tested by time and intelligence which have contributed to human experience. It can see no guide to human perplexity, no hope for the oppressed and anguished, no spur to moral freedom in the alternative position of Augustine, whose words are echoed with approval by Mr. Toynbee: "What gives happiness in life to a human being is something which does not proceed from human nature but which is above human nature."

In *A Study of History* there are many pages of illuminating historical detail which are in no way related to the author's theological prepossessions. But, unfortunately, in his *Civilization on Trial* this bias obscures recognition of where the real center of gravity lies in the issues which constitute civilization's trials. This is manifest in Toynbee's discussion of the conflict between the United States in which "an undiluted [!] regime of private enterprise still prevails," and the Soviet Union. The totalitarian despotism of the Soviet Union is presented as a kind of Christian heresy, a historical hangover from the Greek Orthodox Christendom of the Byzantines. Western democracy, despite and because of its secularism, is a degenerate expression of Christianity. With sublime faith he assumes that the expanding dynamism of Soviet Communism can be contained within the U.N.—provided, of course, the secular "super-culture" of our culture is rebuilt on religious foundations.

There is no indication whatsoever that Toynbee is familiar with Stalinist doctrine and organization, which he uncritically identifies with Marxism. He speaks as if the United States were expanding in the same way as the Soviet Union—gobbling up territories and people against their will. To him the defense of the Western world against the Stalinist crusade is a struggle between free enterprise and collectivism rather than between representative democratic institutions, which permit nations to choose freely the degree of collective control they wish to introduce into their economy, and a world-wide totalitarian police state. He sees rightly that a Persian conquest would have destroyed completely the civilization of the Greek city-states but he has no realistic conception of what would happen to Western civilization if it came under the Soviet yoke. He suggests that a mildly socialistic Western European union might mediate the conflict between the United States and the U.S.S.R. despite the evidence that there is little which Stalin detests more than an independent *democratic* socialist movement.

The reason for this uncertain, fumbling touch to all the great ques-

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tions of the time has already been indicated. Toynbee believes that the downfall of civilizations provides the great opportunity for a universal religion to bring salvation to the individual soul. The worse the chastisement, the greater the likelihood of spiritual rebirth. Although he heatedly denies the allegations of Gibbon and Frazer that Christianity contributed to the decay of Roman civic virtues, his own theological approach to politics, which leaves no room for any great passion except the passion for spiritual redemption, illustrates the unwitting support piety may give to brute power as it moves to crush free minds and free institutions. Although he does not say so explicitly, Toynbee has, in effect, written off Western secular and humanist civilization—a civilization which, with all its imperfections, still holds the possibility of rebirths and renewals of freedom in the only world we will ever know.

Were Toynbee consistent, he would pray for the conversion of the Alarics, Genserics, and Clovises of our time—Stalin, Tito, and Beria—since what troubles him most profoundly about them are not their acts of political commission but of spiritual omission. If we can imagine such a prayer to be answered—and it is not excluded that we may some day see a confessor in every concentration camp—the existence of a *Pax Sovietica,* based possibly on heretical but certainly not on secular foundations, would save us the trouble of imagining what Tertullian's Hell would be like on earth. As it is, the extension of Stalin's regime, even without benefit of clergy, is too great a price to pay either for peace in this world or the promise of salvation in the next.

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BOOKS

THE WALLACE CRUSADE

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What sort of comment is appropriate to this book?

Let me suppose, for a few paragraphs, that it was written by *x*, a man in no way public: a worried small businessman, perhaps, dictating at spare moments in his Topeka office, or a professor who, half-awakened by the rising cost of living from his academic nap, has mounted his rebuilt typewriter to descend into the market place.

I might, then, first wonder how the MS had ever, in these days of price squeezes, found a commercial publisher. Or I might even reflect that Reynal & Hitchcock, whose judgment had accepted it, collapsed not long after into the arms of Harcourt, Brace.

I might then have a sentence or two on the style: a style of a dreariness not to be surpassed in a composition class for retarded sophomores. No wisp of freshness anywhere disturbs the dead beat of this first-reader syntax, these faceless images, this funeral-parlor piety:

> I submit that this program of peace, security, and abundance is the only one which holds out hope in a troubled world in the most confused year in history. . . . And so I call our new party the party of hope. It is also the party of faith, faith that the creative potentialities which exist in every human soul can be harnessed by conscious, voluntary cooperation for harmonious work on behalf of maximum abundance widely shared. . . . The party of hope needs workers to bring light to the dark corners where the afflicted are oppressed by the parties of Hatred, Despair, Scarcity, Exploitation, Hunger, and War.

"The purpose of this book," *x* tells us, "is to give the underlying facts," and he upbraids press and radio and other writers for not dealing in facts. His own technique is, oddly enough, distinguished by its ability to drain all concrete content from his terms. Never is an abstract word plainly defined. The scores of references to "reactionary capitalism" and "reactionary capitalists" include not a single name of any man or organization that might be covered by these cottony blankets. *X*'s world of "progressives," "common man," "men of vision," "exploiters," "real

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issues," must be the purest poetry, for it seems to be inhabited by no actual individuals.

There are cited, I should have to note, a few facts. And here lies *x*'s claim to originality. In stimulating contrast to the reactionary capitalist histories (which give 1903 as the date, and Lenin as the leader), he tells us how the Bolshevik faction was formed, under Plekhanov, in 1898. "At the outbreak of World War I," we can learn, "fewer than 20 percent of the people [of Russia] could read and write" (no doubt "the outbreak of World War I" could be stretched to include 1897, the base date selected by the Bolsheviks in order to make plausible their literacy myth). In the United States, we find, "during the decade of the twenties, private capital furnished for domestic expansion about $28 billion of new capital annually" (reactionary capitalist economists might suggest that *x*, if he is talking about anything at all, has confused the annual rate of total savings with the rate of new investment).

"There were no popular elections in Russia," *x* informs us, "and therefore Lenin preached extreme methods." He does not explain how Lenin's party obtained its representation in the prerevolutionary Duma—presumably, since there were no elections, the members were appointed by the Czar. Even on the Truman Doctrine, which *x* so often belabors, the date of inception is altered by a year from the 1947 figure that is palmed off by the kept press. It hardly needs adding that, in *x*'s history, "the Chinese Communists are Chinese first and communist second," and "pro-Chinese rather than pro-Russian." On the authority of an (unnamed) "representative of the National City Bank," *x* assures us that the Chinese Communists are "pretty much like the old Non-Partisan Leaguers of North Dakota." With a triumphant contradiction, moreover, *x* almost qualifies as a dialectician, when he reveals that the methods of Communism "were a carry-over from and a natural reaction to the absolutism of Czarist Russia."

Toward World Peace, however, was written not by *x*, but by Henry Wallace, a very public figure, most prominent carrier of a very political movement. All such comments as I have started to make on the literary work of *x* are, without exception, inappropriate and irrelevant to the analysis of this campaign document of this particular political movement.

The book, and Wallace himself, are minor episodes in the movement. About the movement there is one, and just one observation of importance: it is the pro-Soviet party in the United States. That is all. There is nothing else.

The usual fallacy in political analysis is undersimplification. Since it is troublesome to face the extreme limitation of choice in politics,

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we tend to take shelter behind the complexities of psychology. We tend to say: millions of Americans (who are most of them certainly not Communists) are following Wallace because they are fed up with the two old parties, because they dislike the Taft-Hartley Bill, because they are suffering under inflation, because they are discontented with inequities of our social structure, afraid that a new war will destroy mankind, concerned over civil rights and racial discrimination, dismayed at the low stature of Trumans and Deweys and Tafts . . . and so on.

One or another of these observations may apply truly enough to the subjective motivation of most individuals who wear the Wallace button. But they are all without political significance. The Wallace movement is the mass extension in the United States of the political arm of the Kremlin. That, and that only, is the political fact.

This conclusion does not have to rest on an abstruse deduction. It is expressed, inadvertently but plainly enough, by *Toward World Peace*. Wallace is constantly protesting about "over-emphasis of the Russian question." He is going to stick to domestic and "American" problems—inflation, civil rights, economic justice. But his whole book is, in substance, about nothing but "the Russian question." Two long chapters out of eight are explicitly about Russia and Communism; in the other six, Russia crops up on every other page. Nor could it be otherwise: the political content of the movement is not defined by Wallace's private wishes.

There are, of course, pious disavowals of Communism—"I" believe in God, "don't like slave labor," think Russia as well as the United States must "compromise," etc. But the scoldings of the Soviet Union are always coy, like the No's of a woman who has decided in advance to yield, and always empty of concrete reference. When it comes to anything specific, whether in the interpretation of the past, or the proposals for the present and the future, the account is always in accord with Communist policy. Is it not the same in Wallace's day-by-day declarations on specific crises that arise: Czechoslovakia, the Marshall Plan, China, Italy, Palestine, or for that matter any important internal problem? When, on what namable occasion, does he offer a *specific* analysis or proposal at variance with *Pravda*?

It is a fact that the Communist Party provides the organizational backbone of the Wallace movement. It is a fact that the Wallace Party would not have come into existence without the prior decision of the Communist Party (that is, of the Kremlin). It is a fact that, if the Communist Party withdrew tomorrow, the Wallace Party would dissolve the day after.

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A political meeting at which a considerable bloc of Wallaceites is present can instruct us. The moral and emotional response of the crowd is being corrupted by this movement, and exposes the political reality. Any insult of an American leader or crack at American policy gets its admiring laughter and applause; each defense, no matter how fantastic, of Soviet policy is applauded and cheered.

Or we may test in this way. Take a Wallaceite (who is not a Communist Party member). Discuss with him, rationally, Wallace's record, and his social and economic views. Show him—it is not difficult—the emptiness, absurdity, internal contradictions. He will not be shaken with the least quiver of doubt. Prove even that Wallace is an "appeaser," an aid to the Communists. It will be still as before. But if you forget all about Wallace, and, somehow (it is not easy), bring him face to face with the problem of Stalinism; if you convince him of the truth about Stalinism, then in that same moment of conviction he departs from the Wallace camp.

But, I am told by liberal and socialist and good-willed and anti-Communist friends, there is after all more to the Wallace movement than just the one fact you are obsessed with. After all he has *some* "good ideas," both in negative criticism of our society and in positive program. I, who am of course a fanatic, reply: no; you are sentimentalizing; he has no good ideas, not one.

A political idea is not a thing-in-itself; it cannot be separated from those who hold it, from what is done with it. But is not protest against racial discrimination a good idea? Not Wallace's protest: because in political fact *his* protest is an instrument not for improving racial relations but for exacerbating them beyond healing, as the Stalinists know, and have so long planned. (Cf., for empirical proof, the Isacson Congressional campaign in the Bronx.) Is it not a good idea to defend civil rights? Not Wallace's defense: because that means, politically, unrestricted freedom for NKVD agents to carry out their assignments. (Cf., the Eisler case.) But Peace, Peace surely is a good idea? Not Wallace's Peace. His Peace means, politically: giving the world to Stalinism. (Cf., his comments on Czechoslovakia, his proposals for China.)

Politics is simple, and it is coarse. Only one vulgar slogan is required to sum up the truth: "A vote for Wallace is a vote for Stalin."

James Burnham

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FICTION CHRONICLE

A LONG FOURTH AND OTHER STORIES. By Peter Taylor. Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.
UNDER A GLASS BELL AND OTHER STORIES. By Anais Nin. Dutton. $3.00.
NINE STORIES. By Vladimir Nabokov. New Directions. $1.50.

There is no proper relation between the stories of Peter Taylor and Anais Nin and yet, forced to read the collections together, I could not help but shudder at the odd hostility between the two generations, the unnatural reversal of temperaments which makes the older writer seem promiscuously immature and the younger one prematurely middle-aged. Anais Nin, who has been publishing since 1930, persists in an ostentatious and desperate youth, an agitated and sometimes admirable truancy; Taylor, appearing in book form for the first time, is even now a kind of A student, modest, corrigible, and traditional. There is a toll to be paid by both sides. Taylor has more talent than ambition; he is too serene, too precocious. In his stories one longs, now and then, for harshness, indiscretion, that large, early ugliness a young writer can well afford, a battle with the inexpressible. In Anais Nin the attraction to the inexpressible is fatal and no writer I can think of has more passionately embraced thin air. Still, she has nerve and goes on her way with a fierce foolishness that is not without beauty as an act, though it is too bad her performance is never equal to her intentions. I suppose it is true that nothing is so boring as intransigence that does not lead to art superior or even equal to that which is dramatically snubbed. The dreary, sour side of programmatic purity—egotism, piety, boastfulness—annihilates what was meant to be joyful and releasing and leaves only the vanity, like that outrageous pride one sees on the faces of the more interesting American derelicts, those who know they can, if they pull themselves together, still go into the family business.

No doubt this middle-class bum is vanishing; martyrdom and the illusion of righteous protest are just as "dated" on the Bowery as elsewhere. In the same way Anais Nin, one of our most self-consciously uncompromising writers, seems old-fashioned. She is vague, dreamy, mercilessly pretentious; the sickly child of distinguished parents—the avant-garde of the twenties—and unfortunately a great bore. Nevertheless, her weakness has its highest appeal when placed beside the competence, caution, and gentility of most of the serious young writers of the moment.

But to go on with Peter Taylor and to relieve both writers of an impossible union, the stories in *A Long Fourth* are sincere and always

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interesting. It is obvious that Taylor has learned much from the best living Southern writers. One feels it most happily in his grace and directness. Beyond that I don't know how profitable it is to think of these stories about middle-class Nashville and Memphis as a comment upon the South—indeed, the only disturbing note in them is just this business of *The South*. Taylor seems to be in a dilemma; he wants to say yes and no at the same time and in answer to a question not quite clear to me. Implicitly he suggests that his tales of contemporary Tennessee have something to do with a larger social theme, city and country, fathers and sons, industrialism and agrarianism. On the other hand, being young and of the present, he knows the past and its choices only in a literary way and they come into his work in a diluted, timid form. The result is that his older characters and their bewilderments are rather conventional and forced, whereas the young people are always alive and charming. (Speaking of "Southern" literature, I suspect no one is now in a position to write it except the English and they seem, for good historical reasons, to be doing just that. Crude city children trample upon ancestral flowerbeds, old family houses are revisited, classes are suffering a recent doom, colorful people are out of place in a drab, impoverished world.) In Taylor's stories the old order changeth, yes; a terrible, citified girl in "A Long Fourth" makes progressive conversation while the Southern mother goes through a moral and emotional crisis with an old Negro servant; an uncle regrets that people have neither honor nor manners nowadays; a little boy in "Skyline," one of the best pieces, sees his father change from respectability and confidence into an anonymous man. Still one cannot make much of this and even in South Dakota some people must remember better days.

What is fine about Taylor's stories is not his speculation about the disintegration of family life, but his delicately individual creation of particular families and his amazing skill in getting a great many distinct characters into a short scene; not the past and the present of the South, but the love-making on the front porch, the sexless, sinister khaki and woolen socks of the dedicated scoutmaster, the wonderfully repetitive conversation about the weather in "Rain in the Heart." The dialogue is superb, regularly reproducing the accents of life with such precision that the most ordinary exchange seems witty and fresh.

Anais Nin, on the other hand, shuns the real world as if it had a bad reputation. This elegant snobbishness seems not designed to get her on in good society, but to allow her to sneak away to the psychological underworld revealed in the following, frightening images. "I walked pinned to a spider web of fantasies spun during the night, obstinately

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followed during the day. This spider web was broken by a foghorn, and by the chiming of the hours. . . . I sank into a labyrinth of silence. My feet were covered with fur, my hand with leather, my legs wrapped in accordion-pleated cotton, tied with silken whips. Reindeer fur on my breast."

A few of the short pieces in *Under a Glass Bell* are quite effective, but in all of them there is too much straining for the exotic and a pathological appetite for mystification. Miss Nin likes abstractions ("The unveiling of a woman is a delicate matter. It will not happen overnight. We are all afraid of what we shall find.") and falls without warning into an ecstasy which reminds me of nothing so much as those small-town spiritualists who spoil their productions by undramatic impatience and go into a trance before they have taken off their hats.

The subject matter of these stories is usually the eternal feminine. On the surface there is the hint that great secrets are being revealed for the first time and yet, as the atmosphere of revelation thickens, the language becomes increasingly indirect and unsuggestive. It seems to be characteristic of women writers to "unveil" by pulling out every old veil in the trunk. The more they know about themselves and their sex the more they are, unconsciously I believe, determined to keep the faith. They set out grimly to make a speech, weaken, and end by doing a pantomime with gestures, moods, and rhythms, a sort of modern dance, which gives the illusion of having opened the bedroom door without involving the performer in a recognizable scandal. It is not the discretion that is out of place, but the implication that an innocent tea party has really been a brawl. As Jung observed, men worship Circe, a clear and realistic figure, while the women set out grandly after the Flying Dutchman. This hapless journey through space soon becomes dull, in spite of the quick, nervous energy women writers put into it. Facts, drama, and temptation are replaced by the rhetoric of enormous emotion; the scenery of passion, the garden of love, are wonderfully rendered in the elaborate, elusive style for which women are famous. It is only in the end, after the clever spell is broken, that we realize Adam and Eve have been omitted. Or were they present in disguise, perhaps speaking to us as a tree and a brook?

All of these hesitations in the woman writer's treatment of love and sexual emotion are particularly important in Anais Nin's work, because sex is the true object of her considerable literary devotions. And she is thoroughly feminine in that this subject, certain to assure a man's income for life, has not only made her work commercially unprofitable, but almost unreadable. The contemplation of passion and the soul of a

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woman leads her not to the rocks, but high up in the stratosphere, so high the mind cannot follow her curious flight.

Another bedeviling aspect of Anais Nin's work is the problem of the fabulous diary. This diary, unpublished so far as I know, is said to be at present in its sixty-fifth volume. At least Henry Miller has read it and his opinion goes, "When given to the world it will take its place beside the revelations of St. Augustine, Petronius, Rousseau, Proust, and others." I would not mention this private, buried work if its contents were not so often necessary to the understanding of Miss Nin's fiction. One story begins, "I was eleven years old when I walked into the labyrinth of my diary," and another ends, "The little donkey—my diary burdened with my past—with small faltering steps is walking to the market. . . ." We are told nothing about the diary, but asked to feel, by some mysterious projection, its significance and power as a dominating theme. And then, in a really extraordinary way, the undivulged contents of the diary seem to contain the meaning of a long novelette, "Winter of Artifice," reprinted in this new collection. The tone of this story is heavy, urgent, and ominous; there is not a moment of humor, not a word of relief from its underwater agony. In it you learn vaguely that a girl has loved her father too well, though in just what way is ambiguous, but she has loved him so terribly she must be psychoanalyzed. "Her father's jealousy began with the reading of her diary." No doubt the diary fully explains the relationship and gives adequate motivation for the anguish echoed here. As it is, however, "Winter of Artifice" can only be read as a Greek chorus chanting about the most miserable of women and apparently unaware that the tragedy has been withheld from the audience.

Vladimir Nabokov stands awkwardly in this review and I cannot think of a convenient link to the two previously discussed writers. These excellent stories of his are a literary curiosity: they are postwar with regard to both war one and war two, and at the same time. Nabokov writes with the style, vitality, and audacity of the experimental writers of the twenties and yet his enemy is a current monster, the totalitarian mind. "The Assistant Producer," "Double Talk," and "That in Aleppo Once" are superior examples of the way in which political treachery, the confusion of the liberal mind, and political exile may be treated without the usual documentary thud of most fiction in any way concerned with politics. Nabokov's chief virtue in these stories is his gaiety, a quality not much admired by American book buyers unless it is found in gags. At his best he is unique and inspired and certainly should be more widely read. True, the *New Yorker* has been printing him, but

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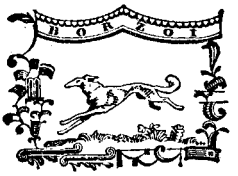

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their selections, while on a high level for a popular magazine, have been confined, for the present at least, to reminiscences of childhood. The *New Yorker*'s psyche is very puzzling; it allows a graceful, admirable pace to children, but insists that the adult be killed off in a few, short, violent sentences.

Elizabeth Hardwick

ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL BATTLEFRONT

SCIENCE AND IDEALISM. By Maurice Cornforth. New York: International Publishers. $3.00.

Whether or not Lenin succeeded in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in demolishing the philosophy of Ernst Mach, is of smaller moment for subsequent intellectual history than is the fact that Lenin's views have been taken by orthodox Communists as authoritative on all questions dealing with epistemology and the interpretation of science. Lenin pronounced Mach to be an idealist, a solipsist, and a sophistical defender of a reactionary ideology. Faithful followers of Lenin have in consequence, and without an independent examination of the actual evidence, condemned as false and socially dangerous all tendencies in contemporary philosophy which derive some of their inspiration from Mach or from the British empiricistic tradition.

However, Lenin wrote before Cambridge analytic philosophy, logical positivism, and pragmatism were born or acquired their present influence; the polemic contained in his book is therefore no longer directly relevant to the contemporary state of philosophy in the West. The book under review, written by an Englishman who received his philosophic training at Cambridge University, is an obvious attempt to bring Lenin's critique of positivism up to date, and to evaluate current antimetaphysical empirical philosophies from a "materialist" standpoint. In the first of the two parts of his volume Cornforth repeats Lenin's performance, and again "refutes" traditional British empiricism and the phenomenalism of Kant and of Mach. In the second part, the larger of the two, he addresses himself to the views of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Rudolf Carnap; he claims to show in it that these modern descendants of Berkeley and Hume have produced only a barren antiscientific scholasticism, a philosophy which seeks to reconcile science and religion, a system of ideas which by distorting the significance of science and scientific methods is an obstacle

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to human progress. He does not mention pragmatism, but his American publishers voice their confidence on the dust cover that "the reader can easily see for himself the essential unity of pragmatism with the doctrines discussed."

Though he follows in the footsteps of Lenin, Cornforth is incomparably more subtle and expert in philosophical matters than was his guide. He does not systematically confuse, as Lenin so often did, questions of the genesis of knowledge with issues concerning the meaning and validity of the conclusions of inquiry. Nor does he rely as uniformly as did Lenin on invidious epithets in order to dispose of views he does not like. Moreover, he advances sound criticisms of atomistic sensationalism and of the attempts to base all knowledge on the apprehension of "atomic facts"—even if the criticisms are of a type frequently made by many who subscribe to the general positions under his attack. Nevertheless, the book as a whole is essentially a document for true believers. Its measure of what is sound in philosophy is borrowed uncritically from the sacred texts of the Communist Fathers. It misconstrues central theses of the positions criticized, so that the accounts given of them are frequently little short of caricature. And its ultimate criteria of validity are not the normal standards of truth employed in scientific inquiry and philosophical analysis, but are explicitly formulated in terms of the alleged social significance of the views considered. "The test of a philosophy," Cornforth declares, "must be judged by how far it helps to understand and to solve the practical problems facing humanity. This is a test, not merely of its social utility, but of its truth."

Only a fraction of the evidence to support this over-all judgment can be presented here. Cornforth claims to show that antimetaphysical empiricistic philosophy inevitably eventuates in solipsism. But in the case of Mach, for example, he establishes this conclusion only by interpreting Mach's "neutral elements" as inherently and exclusively "subjective" and "mental." And yet Mach explicitly denied this, and held that on the contrary the directly apprehendable data into which he believed things are analyzable are neutral to the distinction between the physical and the mental. Again, Cornforth rejects the analyses of Russell and others, which aim to exhibit the meaning of ordinary scientific statements in terms of statements about sense-data, on the ground that knowledge is not gained through comparing sensations, but only by "acting on things." However, though Cornforth is undoubtedly correct in his positive claim, he states it in a way so as to misrepresent those whom he is discussing. There is no inherent incomparability between an "activist" account of the way knowledge is achieved and Rus-

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sell's epistemology, especially since for Russell the meaning of statements about such actions are theoretically expressible by complex sets of statements about sense-data. Even the importance of Russell's work on the foundations of mathematics is minimized by Cornforth. He declares, for example, that the important discoveries in pure logic (those by Goedel are intended) concerning the impossibility of proving certain formal systems to be consistent, are "fatal" to Russell's account of the nature of mathematics. But the fact is that Goedel's researches do not bear on Russell's central thesis, while on the other hand Goedel's own work rests squarely on Russell's previous labors.

Cornforth devotes special attention to Carnap. However, he discusses only views held by Carnap prior to 1935, and ignores the fact that the latter has abandoned his earlier identification of philosophy with the syntactical analysis of language. This is a disastrous oversight in the case of a school of thought still undergoing development. On the other hand, even the criticisms of Carnap's earlier doctrines fail to hit any recognizable target. Cornforth asserts Carnap to hold that scientific statements refer to nothing beyond the words contained in them, and in consequence he easily convicts Carnap of gross absurdity. But unfortunately for Cornforth's case, nothing that Carnap said yields the consequences Cornforth exhibits. For to say as Carnap at one time did that the subject-matter of *philosophic* analysis consists of the statements made in the sciences, is not to maintain that the subject-matter of the *sciences* consists of statements. Cornforth also attacks logical positivism for holding that the "protocol statements" which formulate the outcome of observations intended to test a scientific hypothesis are "arbitrary"; and he declares that for positivists scientific method is nothing but an "arbitrary juggling with statements." Yet all that he can quote to support this indictment, is the positivist characterization of protocols as "needing no justification." Is there, however, no difference between the claim that observations need no justification (because, as formulations of brute, contingent data, no theoretical demonstration can be given for them), and the claim that such statements are irresponsibly arbitrary? And finally, Cornforth rejects as absurd the positivistic thesis of "physicalism"—the thesis that all meaningful statements must be verifiable in terms of observable traits of physical objects found in ordinary experience. He rejects this doctrine, because it allegedly "reduces" everything to "motions of matter," and therefore prohibits the recognition of specifically social behaviors and distinctions. In point of fact, however, and in spite of its name, physicalism is not a metaphysical doctrine about the ultimate

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natures of things, and does not assert that whatever exists is constituted out of matter in motion. Physicalism is a methodological principle (singularly enough, one which is tacitly employed by Cornforth in his own critique of atomistic sensationalism) for distinguishing statements that possess an identifiable meaning from those that do not.

The erection of social utility into the criterion of truth is a first step toward the suppression of free inquiry. Even so, the application of this standard to positivistic philosophy yields results not congruous with Cornforth's evaluation of that philosophy as a barren scholasticism. It has not occurred to him that Helmholtz, Mach, and Poincaré, to cite but three well-known names, have had a hand in producing the intellectual climate which has made possible modern advances in physics. In any event, the critiques of traditional scientific dogmas these men supplied are based on some form of positivistic empiricism. Nor are the consequences of Cornforth's rejection of positivistic criteria of meaning, and of his adoption of the principles of dialectic materialism, uniformly happy ones. In opposition to many positivists, he maintains that the propositions of theology can be neither verified nor refuted by the methods of science, but that they are nevertheless cognitively meaningful. However, he also declares that science "rules out" as invalid important theological doctrines, in particular those concerning God and immortality. Just how science can manage to do this, if its methods are irrelevant for either confirming or disconfirming such doctrines, is a neat trick which Cornforth does not trouble to explain. Again, fortified by the laws of dialectic materialism, he affirms that even self-contradictory formulations express interactions between fundamental opposites in nature, and that an inconsistent philosophy is a representation of the opposition between different aspects of reality. Accordingly, even if antimetaphysical empiricism were as absurdly contradictory as Cornforth makes it out to be, that philosophy cannot be an unmitigated falsehood and must contain at least a measure of truth. Cornforth should beware; he is in mortal danger of acknowledging an unpardonable heresy!

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THE REPRESSIVE IMPULSE

This evening* we are considering a phenomenon which involves us in an ultimate way. We are people who believe that our very existence is defined by our freedom to think and speak as we choose and, in the arts, to make what we choose. And so the extreme limitation of that freedom by a human agency does not appear to us merely as the curtailment of a right—it appears as nothing less than annihilation.

But just because we regard intellectual and artistic repression in this ultimate way we have some difficulty in thinking about it concretely. Even when we know about it as a fact, as it is in Russia today, we have the sense that it is infinitely removed from us. It is so much the anti-principle of our existence that our minds find it nearly inconceivable or only abstractly conceivable. It is as if Nature had gone astray and we found ourselves without the mental categories to deal with the new order of events. We do not in the least doubt the fact, but we cannot wholly grasp it because we do not really grasp the reason behind the fact.

I remember with what genuinely naive wonder I once questioned Mr. Nabokov about the rationale of the Russian intellectual situation. I could, of course, understand the gross phenomenon of intellectual repression or direction. If artists have official status, then it is not hard to understand, from analogies which are plentiful in our own culture, how the chief says to his subordinate, "Look, the Boss doesn't like the way you're doing it. Make it more folksy"—or "democratic" or "simple" or "joyous" or the adjective of whatever quality is at the moment felt to be needed. But what lay quite beyond my comprehension was the metaphysical refinement of repression, the publicized discussion of the most abstruse technical matters, the gratuitous humiliation of notable artists. I could not understand this procedure because I could not discover what practical purpose it might serve. Mr. Nabokov's reply, by its concreteness, by its evocation of human personalities and particular events, suggested to me how much I had

* These remarks were originally made by Lionel Trilling at a discussion, held in April by Europe-America Groups, on the subject, "The Soviet Attack on Culture—What Happened and What Does It Mean?" The main speaker was Nicolas Nabokov, whose speech will be printed in the next number of *Politics*. The other speakers who took part in the panel discussion were Meyer Schapiro and Dwight Macdonald.

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committed myself to an oversimplified rationalistic view. It was as if in the Enlightenment I had assumed that religion was to be understood as nothing but a hoax put over on the people by fraudulent magician-priests.

This sort of inadequate rationalism, this assumption that only practical ends are being sought by the extreme actions we condemn, is likely to mark and defeat our attempts to understand the authoritarian state. To counteract this I am going to suggest that we consider the question of intellectual tyranny not only in the specific Russian context but also in two other contexts. One context is the whole tendency of modern Western culture. The other context is our private selves.

I do not suggest this shift in context in order to check in the least our horror and indignation at the specific Russian situation. I haven't the slightest intention of implying that we have no right to judge Russia because "our own hands are not clean." My reason for the suggestion is simply this: when we encounter extremes of action which we hate and fear, we are inclined to believe that they are wholly discontinuous with our own traditional ways, and certainly that they are discontinuous with ourselves; I think that only by surrendering the illusion of discontinuity will we realize and grasp the Russian situation.

Since the French Revolution the organization of Western society has increasingly become an organization on the basis of ideas. A century and a half ago that statement would have been an unqualifiedly cheerful one. Even twenty-five years ago it would have had only a happy implication. But today we must regard the statement with at least ambivalence. We know now that ideas grow into ideologies and that ideologies are seldom benign, that ideas are indeed instrumental but that they contrive concentration camps quite as readily as hospitals. It would indeed be foolish to abandon all that we learned from Marx about the material and historical conditions of ideas. Yet we can no longer think that ideas and ideologies are nothing but the "facades" of raw materialistic desires. Nor can we now believe that ideas are only instrumental. They are not perfectly autonomous, but neither are they subordinate to certain aims in view. Nor are they likely to be cynically contrived to mask the meaning of deeds—one has but to read Goebbels' diaries to be convinced that the most vicious idealogue is likely to be sincere, intellectual and, in his own mind, virtuous.

The attachment to explicit ideas which is characteristic of our culture today is forming new class structures and new sub-cultures. And its results must make us uneasy. Compare the Wallace movement with any earlier populist movement in America and you will

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see how much more ideologized it is than its predecessors. You will see too how much more bitter it is in its emotions. I believe that it is bitter in the degree that it is ideologized. I even venture to say that it is bitter in the degree that its members refer not to the practical issues of their lives but to some vision they have of their total being, some fantasy of self which their ideology embodies.

We can characterize in much the same way the attachment of many Jews in this country to a certain kind of Zionist action. Nothing could be more significant of the modern situation than the intransigent commitment of this traditionally peaceable group to the ideas of the terrorist group in Palestine, with the result that, because of the decisiveness of American support, other Zionist groups, as large in numbers, as staunch in loyalty to Zionist aims, but less extreme in policy are left as powerless in Palestine as they are unheard in this country. This is not a matter which I have time to go into now, but I refer you to the article in the April issue of *Commentary* in which Robert Weltsch, the Zionist journalist, pleads with American Jews not to allow their extremist ideology to blind them to the realities of the Palestinian situation.

In art the quality of ideological partisanship is, in potentiality, no less intense and violent. I recently chanced to read in a high school

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newspaper a debate over the merits of swing as against rebop. One could only admire the intelligence and scholarship and seriousness of the disputants. Yet at the same time one was a little chilled to see how far ideology had gone. The matter was argued in terms which would not have been out of place at some Plenum of Musicologists, so clear were the antagonists about the bad final implications of one preference or another. And only last night I was given a kind of confirmation of my fears—in a survey of another school it was found that all the convinced Stalinist children of Stalinist parents said that they preferred New Orleans jazz to rebop. I myself have no way of evaluating their preference but I think I can evaluate their reasons: they said they found rebop too difficult, individual, and intellectual. On further questioning, however, it was disclosed that they preferred New Orleans jazz only for polemical purposes—actually they didn't like it at all, what they really liked was folk ballads.

This is funny no doubt, and yet it is rather grimly significant of the adult cultural world which it reflects. We live in a cultural situation in which it is the mark of intellectual power and virtue to deal with everything in its ultimate possible value and to deal with everything in terms of polemic. This characterizes our intellectual life at every point.

I proposed our private selves as the second of two contexts. I cannot undertake to speak of what goes on in the hearts of others, but looking at my own emotions I must recognize how fierce are my first responses to works of art and thought I don't approve of, how violent and bitter I feel toward them, how much I want to injure their standing. I am naturally inclined to think that I am not alone in this habit of intellectual response.

What do I want to imply?—that the extension of the intellectual life which we have been witnessing for many decades is inevitably a dangerous thing? or that the intellectual life should be carried on without passion or without final commitment? You will scarcely suppose that this is my intention. I am trying to make real the situation in Russia by making it continuous with what we take for granted among ourselves. To un-

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derstand the situation in Russia we need only conceive the institutionalization of the endemic impulse of our time to overvalue ideology and to associate it with bitterness and violence. We talk easily of repression by authority and reactionary force. What we do not easily conceive is the exclusive and repressive impulse in our own culture and our own hearts. It is not easily conceived, yet any plan for any truly better social community must learn to conceive it and to make provision to guard against its institutionalization.

Lionel Trilling

A PORTRAIT OF THE HIPSTER

As he was the illegitimate son of the Lost Generation, the hipster was really *nowhere*. And, just as amputees often seem to localize their strongest sensations in the *missing* limb, so the hipster longed, from the very beginning, to be *somewhere*. He was like a beetle on its back; his life was a struggle to get *straight*. But the law of human gravity kept him overthrown, because he was always of the minority—opposed in race or feeling to those who owned the machinery of recognition.

The hipster began his inevitable quest for self-definition by sulking in a kind of inchoate delinquency. But this delinquency was merely a negative expression of his needs, and, since it led only into the waiting arms of the ubiquitous law, he was finally forced to *formalize* his resentment and express it *symbolically*. This was the birth of a philosophy—a philosophy of *somewhereness* called *jive*, from *jibe*: to agree, or harmonize. By discharging his would-be aggressions *symbolically*, the hipster harmonized or reconciled himself with his society.

At the natural stage in its growth, jive began to talk. It had been content at first with merely making sounds — physiognomic talk — but then it developed language. And, appropriately enough, this language described the world as seen through the hipster's eyes. In fact, that was its function: to re-edit the world with new definitions . . . jive definitions.

Since articulateness is a condition for, if not actually a cause of, anxiety, the hipster relieved his anxiety by disarticulating himself. He cut the world down to size—reduced it to a small stage with a few props and a curtain of jive. In a vocabulary of a dozen verbs, adjectives, and nouns he could describe everything that happened in it. It was poker with no joker, nothing wild.

There were no neutral words in this vocabulary; it was put up or shut up, a purely polemical language in which every word had a

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job of *evaluation* as well as designation. These evaluations were absolute; the hipster banished all comparatives, qualifiers, and other syntactical uncertainties. Everything was dichotomously *solid, gone, out of this world,* or *nowhere, sad, beat,* a *drag.*

In there was, of course, somewhereness. *Nowhere,* the hipster's favorite pejorative, was an *abracadabra* to make things disappear. *Solid* connoted the stuff, the reality, of existence; it meant concreteness in a bewilderingly abstract world. A *drag* was something which "dragged" implications along with it, something which was embedded in an inseparable, complex, ambiguous—and thus, possibly threatening—context.

Because of its polemical character, the language of jive was rich in aggressiveness, much of it couched in sexual metaphors. Since the hipster never did anything as an end in itself, and since he only gave of himself in aggression of one kind or another, sex was subsumed under aggression, and it supplied a vocabulary for the mechanics of aggression. The use of the sexual metaphor was also a form of irony, like certain primitive peoples' habit of parodying civilized modes of intercourse. The person on the tail end of a sexual metaphor was conceived of as lugubriously victimized; i.e., expecting but not receiving.

One of the basic ingredients of jive language was a priorism. The a priori assumption was a short cut to somewhereness. It arose out of a desperate, unquenchable need to know the score; it was a great projection, a primary, self-preserving postulate. It meant "it is given to us to understand." The indefinable authority it provided was like a powerful primordial or instinctual orientation in a threatening chaos of complex interrelations. The hipster's frequent use of metonymy and metonymous gestures (e.g., brushing palms for handshaking, extending an index finger, without raising the arm, as a form of greeting, etc.) also connoted prior understanding, there is no need to elaborate, I dig you, man, etc.

Carrying his language and his new philosophy like concealed weapons, the hipster set out to conquer the world. He took his stand on the corner and began to direct human traffic. His significance was unmistakable. His face—"the cross-section of a motion"—was frozen in the "physiognomy of astuteness."

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Eyes shrewdly narrowed, mouth slackened in the extremity of perspicuous sentience, he kept tabs, like a suspicious proprietor, on his environment. He stood always a little apart from the group. His feet solidly planted, his shoulders drawn up, his elbows in, hands pressed to sides, he was a pylon around whose implacability the world obsequiously careered.

Occasionally he brandished his padded shoulders, warning humanity to clear him a space. He flourished his thirty-one inch pegs like banners. His two and seven-eighths inch brim was snapped with absolute symmetry. Its exactness was a symbol of his control, his domination of contingency. From time to time he turned to the candy store window, and with an esoteric gesture, reshaped his roll collar, which came up very high on his neck. He was, indeed, up to the neck in somewhereness.

He affected a white streak, made with powder, in his hair. This was the outer sign of a significant, prophetic mutation. And he always wore dark glasses, because normal light offended his eyes. He was an underground man, requiring especial adjustment to ordinary conditions; he was a lucifugous creature of the darkness, where sex, gambling, crime, and other bold acts of consequence occurred.

At intervals he made an inspection tour of the neighborhood to see that everything was in order. The importance of this round was implicit in the portentous trochees of his stride, which, being unnaturally accentual, or discontinuous, expressed his particularity, lifted him, so to speak, out of the ordinary rhythm of normal cosmic pulsation. He was a discrete entity—separate, critical, and defining.

Jive music and tea were the two most important components of the hipster's life. Music was not, as has often been supposed, a stimulus to dancing. For the hipster rarely danced; he was beyond the reach of stimuli. If he did dance, it was half parody—"second removism"—and he danced only to the off-beat, in a morganatic one to two ratio with the music.

Actually, jive music was the hip-

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ster's autobiography, a score to which his life was the text. The first intimations of jive could be heard in the Blues. Jive's Blue Period was very much like Picasso's: it dealt with lives that were sad, stark, and isolated. It represented a relatively realistic or naturalistic stage of development.

Blues turned to jazz. In jazz, as in early, analytical cubism, things were sharpened and accentuated, thrown into bolder relief. Words were used somewhat less frequently than in Blues; the instruments talked instead. The solo instrument became the narrator. Sometimes (e.g., Cootie Williams) it came very close to literally talking. Usually it spoke passionately, violently, complainingly, against a background of excitedly pulsating drums and guitar, ruminating bass, and assenting orchestration. But, in spite of its passion, jazz was almost always coherent and its intent clear and unequivocal.

Bebop, the third stage in jive music, was analogous in some respects to synthetic cubism. Specific situations, or referents, had largely disappeared; only their "essences" remained. By this time the hipster was no longer willing to be regarded as a primitive; bebop, therefore, was "cerebral" music, expressing the hipster's pretensions, his desire for an imposing, full-dress body of doctrine.

Surprise, "second-removism," and extended virtuosity were the chief characteristics of the bebopper's style. He often achieved surprise by using a tried and true tactic of his favorite comic strip heroes:

> The "enemy" is waiting in a room with drawn gun. The hero kicks open the door and bursts in—*not upright, in the line of fire*—but cleverly lying on the floor, from which position he triumphantly blasts away, while the enemy still aims, ineffectually, at his own expectations.

Borrowing this stratagem, the bebop soloist often entered at an unexpected altitude, came in on an unexpected note, thereby catching the listener off guard and conquering him before he recovered from his surprise.

"Second-removism"—*capping* the *squares*—was the dogma of initiation. It established the hipster as keeper of enigmas, ironical pedagogue, a self-appointed exegete. Using his *shrewd* Socratic method, he discovered the world to the naive, who still tilted with the windmills of one-level meaning. That which you heard in bebop was always *something else, not* the thing you expected; it was always negatively derived, abstraction *from,* not *to.*

The virtuosity of the bebopper resembled that of the street-corner evangelist who revels in his unbroken delivery. The remarkable run-on quality of bebop solos suggested the infinite resources of the hipster, who could improvise indefinitely, whose invention knew no end, who was, in fact, omniscient.

All the best qualities of jazz—tension, élan, sincerity, violence,

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immediacy—were toned down in bebop. Bebop's style seemed to consist, to a great extent, in *evading* tension, in connecting, by extreme dexterity, each phrase with another, so that nothing remained, everything was lost in a shuffle of decapitated cadences. This corresponded to the hipster's social behavior as jester, jongleur, or prestidigitator. But it was his own fate he had caused to disappear for the audience, and now the only trick he had left was the monotonous gag of pulling himself—by his own ears, grinning and gratuitous—up out of the hat.

The élan of jazz was weeded out of bebop because all enthusiasm was naive, nowhere, too simple. Bebop was the hipster's seven types of ambiguity, his Laocoön, illustrating his struggle with his own defensive deviousness. It was the disintegrated symbol, the shards, of his attitude toward himself and the world. It presented the hipster as performer, retreated to an abstract stage of *tea* and pretension, losing himself in the multiple mirrors of his fugitive chords. This conception was borne out by the surprising mediocrity of bebop orchestrations, which often had the perfunctory quality of vaudeville music, played only to announce the coming spectacle, the soloist, the great Houdini.

Bebop rarely used words, and, when it did, they were only nonsense syllables, significantly paralleling a contemporaneous loss of vitality in jive language itself. Blues and jazz were documentary in a social sense; bebop was the hipster's Emancipation Proclamation in double talk. It showed the hipster as the victim of his own system, volubly tongue-tied, spitting out his own teeth, running between the raindrops of his spattering chords, never getting wet, washed clean, baptized, or quenching his thirst. He no longer had anything relevant to himself to say—in both his musical and linguistic expression he had finally abstracted himself from his real position in society.

His next step was to abstract himself in action. *Tea* made this possible. Tea (marihuana) and other drugs supplied the hipster with an indispensable outlet. His situation was too extreme, too tense, to be satisfied with mere fantasy or animistic domination of the environment. Tea provided him with a free world to expatiate in. It had the same function as trance

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in Bali, where the unbearable flatness and de-emotionalization of "waking" life is compensated for by trance ecstasy. The hipster's life, like the Balinese's, became schizoid; whenever possible, he escaped into the richer world of tea, where, for the helpless and humiliating image of a beetle on its back, he could substitute one of himself floating or flying, "high" in spirits, dreamily dissociated, in contrast to the ceaseless pressure exerted on him in real life. Getting high was a form of artificially induced dream catharsis. It differed from *lush* (whisky) in that it didn't encourage aggression. It fostered, rather, the sentimental values so deeply lacking in the hipster's life. It became a *raison d'être,* a calling, an experience shared with fellow believers, a respite, a heaven or haven.

Under jive the external world was greatly simplified for the hipster, but his own role in it grew considerably more complicated. The function of his simplification had been to reduce the world to schematic proportions which could easily be manipulated in actual, symbolical, or ritual relationships; to provide him with a manageable mythology. Now, moving in this mythology, this tense fantasy of somewhereness, the hipster supported a completely solipsistic system. His every word and gesture now had a history and a burden of implication.

Sometimes he took his own solipsism too seriously and slipped into criminal assertions of his will. Unconsciously, he still wanted terribly to take part in the cause and effect that determined the real world. Because he had not been allowed to conceive of himself *functionally or socially,* he had conceived of himself *dramatically,* and, taken in by his own art, he often enacted it in actual defiance, self-assertion, impulse, or crime.

That he was a direct expression of his culture was immediately apparent in its reaction to him. The less sensitive elements dismissed him as they dismissed everything. The intellectuals *manqués,* however, the desperate barometers of society, took him into their bosom. Ransacking everything for meaning, admiring insurgence, they attributed every heroism to the hipster. He became their "there but for the grip of my superego go I." He was received in the Village as an oracle; his language was *the revolution of the word, the personal idiom.* He was the great instinctual man, an ambassador from the Id. He was asked to read things, look at things, feel things, taste things, and report. What was it? Was it *in there?* Was it *gone?* Was it *fine?* He was an interpreter for the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the insensible, the impotent.

With such an audience, nothing was too much. The hipster promptly became, in his own eyes, a poet, a seer, a hero. He laid claims to apocalyptic visions and heuristic

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discoveries when he *picked up*; he was Lazarus, come back from the dead, come back to tell them all, he would tell them all. He conspicuously consumed himself in a high flame. He cared nothing for catabolic consequences; he was so prodigal as to be invulnerable.

And here he was ruined. The frantic praise of the impotent meant recognition—*actual somewhereness*—to the hipster. He got what he wanted; he stopped protesting, reacting. He began to bureaucratize jive as a machinery for securing the actual—really the *false*—somewhereness. Jive, which had originally been a critical system, a kind of Surrealism, a personal revision of existing disparities, now grew moribundly self-conscious, smug, encapsulated, isolated from its source, from the sickness which spawned it. It grew more rigid than the institutions it had set out to defy. It became a boring routine. The hipster—once an unregenerate individualist, an underground poet, a guerrilla—had become a pretentious poet laureate. His old subversiveness, his ferocity, was now so manifestly rhetorical as to be obviously harmless. He was bought and placed in the zoo. He was *somewhere* at last—comfortably ensconced in the 52nd Street clip joints, in Carnegie Hall, and *Life*. He was *in there* . . . he was back in the American womb. And it was just as unhygienic as ever.

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RECOMMENDATION

Sirs:

I would like to call attention to a book which affects everybody, and which it is the business of everyone to read who is seriously concerned with the art or freedom or politics of the future of human values. This book is Jerzy Gliksman's *Tell the West,* published by the Gresham Press, New York City. It is a straightforward *description,* without any sermonizing or political commentary, of the author's experiences in the prisons and forced labor camps of the Soviet Union. Whatever the reader's *parti pris,* this authentic first-hand account, exciting yet severely factual in its details, will challenge him to reconsider his assumptions about man and society. Here is the raw material that perhaps only a Dante could do justice to. Gliksman is a lifelong Socialist, a democrat, and Jew who writes without hatred, without a new program for salvation, without any hope or faith except that other human beings may be interested in learning the truth. No one who fails to read this book can understand what the world may be like tomorrow for him and his children, what the world *now* is for millions and millions of his fellowmen. No one should write another line until he has read this book from beginning to end.

It does what arguments, exhortation, and warnings seldom do: it makes us see what we have not seen before.

Sidney Hook

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Sirs:

In his comment "Disillusionment and Partial Answers" (PARTISAN REVIEW, May, 1948), Philip Rahv writes: "A series of immense blunders, mainly on the part of Roosevelt in his dealings with the Soviet government, have put capitalism in so perilous a situation that despite all fears and doubts it must extend its support to the semi-socialist economies of western Europe. It must perforce accept democratic socialism if it is to repulse totalitarian Communism."

This, it seems to me, is a dangerous half-truth and emphasizes an evasion of which one becomes increasingly conscious as Rahv's thesis unfolds. He nowhere deals with the question of war and militarism which is central to our time.

If U.S. policy were concentrated upon stopping Russia *without war,* there is little doubt that increasing collaboration with "the semisocialist economies of western Europe" would be necessary. But the facts are that it is gearing itself for war. To say this in no way absolves the Soviet regime for the course it is pursuing which is a primary factor in strengthening the hand of the militarists throughout the world.

If the present armament race is allowed to continue and develop, however, it is futile to talk of democratic socialism. You cannot saddle the peoples of the world, Communist and non-Communist, with such expenditures and at the same time increase their living standards. You may get some form of state capitalism in western Europe in the midst of an armaments race; you won't get a strengthening of the tendencies toward democratic socialism.

Until Rahv deals in some effective way with this question, his answer too will remain a distinctly "partial" one and little more "realistic" than those attitudes he criticizes.

Travers Clement

New York City

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Sirs:

I've been getting PARTISAN REVIEW for some time now and have increasingly thought that PR, with *Horizon*, represents an authentic cultural voice, one the voice of the very-consciously-liberal American and the other of the cynical but trying-very-hard-to-be-liberal "civilized" Briton. There is a similarity. I like both magazines and have constantly urged my friends to read them.

A few moments ago I finished Philip Rahv's "Disillusionment and Partial Answers" in your May issue—a very excellent piece, and I want to comment on it.

I think it an excellent article, as I say, and more so a timely one. As a reader, I have long recognized the fact that you must have your little horse to ride—Stalinism—and I agree with you in this except that I wish you would just quietly become aware of the fact that when you get excited about Stalinism you often indulge in a cliché approach, going over and re-emphasizing ground that many of your readers know about and recognize. It is true, all true, but I sometimes do feel, not by any means that you haven't convinced me, but just that "the boys are at it again." Say it, make your point and go on. However, it is likely, I am aware, that you will continue to do so, and I am ready to put up with it, because you usually do get on and get to the point.

I liked Rahv's article because he does come out strongly for some centralization of thought amongst liberals. Just yesterday I read in the most recent *Horizon* a somber piece by Bertrand Russell, a kind of mathematician's analysis of what-type-of-war-or-peace-will-it-be. This is all very well but surely there must be something other than cold logic or scattering for shelter (Rahv's point about Dos Passos, Macdonald). There must be, surely, nowadays, the possibility of a calm, intelligent, and precise gathering of socialist forces without bickering and particularly without hair-splitting. God knows I don't want to chant the Atom Bomb-or-else because I cannot believe in such dogmatic alternatives. I think, just on this point, that you missed one of the valuable qualities of the thirties. That was an essential belief in man's ability to think things out, an inherent belief in the quality of reason. But reason alone will not get us very far if it wanders off into the lush green pastures of the thirties and overfeeds.

As I see it, looking at Rahv's article, and thinking about it, there are three alternatives, which can be stated briefly: (*a*) reactionary escapism, whether passive (Dos Passos) or active (Malraux?); (*b*) Excelsior! (Macdonald); (*c*) a positive dynamic socialism.

The third point I want to discuss, but I am not at all satisfied that it should be put as I have put it or that indeed it can be summed up so briefly. I do not quite go all the way with Rahv's rather cold advocacy of a *disenchanted socialism*. We must have the "scientific" acceptancy of socialism but surely there must be a human dynamic. At this crucial stage of the game, you're going to have trouble hawking such an intellectual conception. A "socio-economic project of twentieth-century man" is too sterile and *refeened* a

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proposition for our world. I'm not, obviously, suggesting an intellectual but enthusiastic Fabianism nor a roll-up-your-sleeves-and-let-us-plant-some-symbolic-corn-saith-Wallace approach. I think hard-pressed intellectuals must come up with not a creed or code but an intellectual idea of socialism that will stimulate the thinking of other intellectuals . . . an idea that will gradually be reshaped and molded and will express a true socialist conception of our age. I don't think just a few minds can do that; I think it will take many. I think even you people, much as you hit at the way other people fall back on the old platitudinous symbols and conceptions, are in somewhat the same way letting yourselves down easily and trying to push forward an easy answer that lacks all dynamism. We're not attempting to sell the mass of mankind our new approach—we're only trying to sell ourselves. This is a fatal time for slickness.

What I suggest is this: after Macdonald left, PR went through an editorial revision that resulted in a much better magazine. More accent on cultural and less weight on political articles. That, I feel, was right and needed. Since I believe you are for the idea that the prime quality of a civilized world is a subtle evolving appreciation of cultural values, let us say that, as you have done, you should emphasize more and more the best cultural work possible, including Sartre and the others whom you occasionally take a crack at.

The second and really important point is that you should definitely at this point resort to an idea or technique which you have used effectively in the past. That is, the symposium, "Failure-of-Nerve" style. More than ever, I would now like to see in PR a series of creative-political articles dealing with the way in which thinking people believe a dynamic forceful (Third or Eighteenth "Force"—who cares!) vitality can be put back in the theory of socialism that is now dying on its feet. A purely "scientific" (that is, economic) belief in socialism is not enough. It is not enough simply because not a sufficient number of people will go for it but because it represents using the old-type socialism without thinking out the manner in which it should become dynamic in our society. My God! Surely we are not reduced to mumbling old passwords! Surely we can think out how and why socialism should operate in this age so that it will be effective and urgent and cogent. How I hate practicality, but right now socialists had better work at being practical about their socialism!

Allan Anderson

Toronto, Canada

There is no point in dealing with "the question of war and militarism" as such, because we in the United States cannot unilaterally disarm in the hope that Stalinism will then see the light of reason. That course is nothing less than an invitation to even more aggressive tactics on the part of the Kremlin. The rearmament program now undertaken by Congress and the Administration is nothing but a response, and a belated one at that, to the provocations of the Soviet government and the world Communist movement.

As for Mr. Clement's doubt that

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American policy must include democratic European Socialism in its circle of alliances, all one can do is point to the actual operation of this policy. W. Averell Harriman, who is surely an accredited spokesman of the Administration, is reported in the New York Herald Tribune *to have said in a speech on May 5th, that the "United States can trust Socialist governments to stand with it against reactionary Communism . . . our greatest potential ally in Europe is the Social Democrats. We must make them understand that we have a common cause."*

Of course, Mr. Clement is right that so long as the armament race is allowed to continue, the economic boons of democratic socialism remain a remote possibility. But this armament race cannot be talked out of existence by reverting to the anti-war propaganda of the old Socialist Internationals. The historical situation does not permit such a frivolous reiteration of past slogans and conventional political reactions.

As for Mr. Anderson's letter, I am grateful for his friendly comment on my piece but I must point out that he misunderstands me when he seems to equate the idea of a "disenchanted socialism" with the old Marxist concept of a "scientific socialism." The effects of disenchantment are not such as to involve us again in the illusion that our socialist hopes and efforts are necessarily backed by the objective logic and potency of science.—Philip Rahv.

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MALRAUX AND MUSEUMS

Sirs:

No word of comment could add to the penetrating analysis of the European crisis which Malraux and Burnham have presented in PARTISAN REVIEW for April. Never vague in their terminology, never evading an issue, and never submitting to meaningless generalities, they have, in their measured refusal even to discuss such dry rot as democratic rights or civil liberties, given us new proof of the profundity and maturity of their thought. Surely, if Better Worlds are going to be built, Malraux and Burnham are going to build them! Let the Philistines sneer if their blueprints seem to change with some degree of frequency.

May I, however, elaborate briefly on one minor point, if indeed any of the points which Our Leaders have raised can truly be called minor. I have in mind Malraux's idea to remove "the usually abominable academic paintings of the Third Republic" from the museums and to replace them by "the most perfect reproductions" of the world's "hundred or so" greatest paintings. What a stroke of sheer genius in a world which so sorely needs increased standardization of culture! But why, I would ask, stop at museums? Why not also remove the mass of contemporary writing—usually abominable—which clutters up our libraries and store it either in Washington's National Archives or else in the back room of Patrick J. Clarke's Bar on Third Avenue and 55th Street in New York? (For "where art is concerned, it is never good to destroy anything," if I may quote The Master again.) Its place would then be taken up by the world's hundred greatest books, in as many copies as the shelves could hold.

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A truly democratic culture would spread, and no longer would readers be exposed to such second-rate contemporary works as say *Man's Hope* or *The Machiavellians.*

Malraux ha sempre ragione!

Joachim Remak

Washington, D.C.

MISTAKE

Sirs:

I wish to clear up a misunderstanding on the part of Mr. List and his correspondent in the March issue of PARTISAN REVIEW. Mr. List in his reply is confusing Mr. Bernard Herman of Forest Hills, New York, with me. I do not wish to enter into the aesthetics under discussion, but since the last part of Mr. List's reply seems to be an attack upon my assumed dislike of atonal music I wish to point out that during my twelve years with the Columbia Broadcasting System as a conductor I have performed a considerable amount of atonal music. Only last year I was instrumental in bringing before the American public the first radio performance of the concert suite of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck.* Never at any time have I ever rejected any music on the grounds that it was "doctrinated, prejudiced and un-American" and I am not in the least bit uneasy about my position.

Bernard Herrmann

New York City

We very much regret that Mr. List confused Mr. Herman with Mr. Herrmann, and extend our apologies to both. —The Editors.

CHRISTIAN TRADITION IN EUROPE

Sirs:

Reading William Phillips' editorial in the April PR and noticing that the word "Christian" didn't appear in it, made me realize that it was about time to speak my piece on what seems to

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me a tragic defect in recent American political analysis—failure, often merely pettish and perverse, to take the specifically Christian inheritance of European thought seriously.

To miss the power that Christian groups still exert, or that Christian habits of mind still enforce, is, it seems to me, to miss out on a whole dimension of politics.

We have to remember that for how many centuries the Roman Catholic Church was not only an intellectual monitor but a tangible, visible, sacramental reality. The Protestant protest against that sacramentalism by no means destroyed it; it certainly, for one thing, did not destroy the churches themselves; and what dominate the eye necessarily sets up its resonances in the mind. I daresay *"Cuius regio, eius religio"* is still a more decisive key to German thought than any innovations of Frederick the Great or Bismarck. Except in the writing of Reinhold Neibuhr, the extent to which Marx drew on the Christian prophetic tradition does not seem to have been sufficiently understood by American intellectuals. Our American moralistic Protestantism has not prepared us to feel the power and influence of sacramental Christianity. By this, I do not mean to imply the Catholic system of sacraments, a business that can be quite mechanical and which may capitulate as in most cases it has, to the *spirit* of Protestant moralism for the sake of uniformity. No, I mean a consciousness of the Church as the community of the elect, of Christ as New Being, etc. These are the deepest tenets of Christianity, and they were hardly touched by the Darwinian, Spencerian fervor of the nineteenth century. They were abandoned as material for immediate meditation and exercise but they were not fundamentally shaken. The historical criticism of the century has vindicated the historicity of all that is needed to preserve this sacramental sense. Nietzsche's criticism, as I guess I've said and written too often, left Christ out entirely—and was therefore strangely complimentary to Kierkegaard's. Most of the best, youthful writing of Hegel is specifically religious apologetics—of a dubious sort, it is true—but profoundly influenced by Christian habits of mind even in its extravagances. Most of Rimbaud's *Un Saison en Enfer* is about his position vis-à-vis Christianity, but what does American Rimbaud criticism say about

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that, except for a few mumbled references to the "Pascalian sensibility"? What about the intrinsic message of Silone's *And He Hid Himself?* I found it commented on intelligently nowhere in the American political press.

Toynbee hasn't helped things much, I'm afraid. Much of his structure is simply Spengler-cum-Augustine. Toynbee is committed to a rather cynical, ecclesiastical-aristocratic view of history that wouldn't find majority support among the most sensitive religious minds, I believe—even Catholics. Whenever the average secular American speaks of "Christianity" today, he is usually thinking of what Tillich would call religious "heteronomy"; that is, an exhausted, imposed religious legalism, defiant of the rules of logic and history, and cynical about the values of freedom.

But to go back to the simple question of political analysis. Clearly, one need not subscribe to any kind of Christianity to understand its formative power. It's often dreadful how sheepish, sad, and wistful Americans become when the subject is broached. Scenes of Sunday School flash upon the inward eye. Among the philosophers words like "obscurantism," "grandiose," and the like, are put into play. Sometimes a positively comical world-weary finality overcomes the philosopher; well, at least we've disposed of *that* nonsense, his manner implies. It is indeed true that, in principle, we have disposed of the particular parochial kind of religious corruption he is thinking of. Between that oppressive American reality and the increasingly empty platitudes of professional positivism, lies almost the whole history of western Europe.

R. W. Flint

Cambridge, Mass.

memo to printer: "Still Can't Think of a Title"

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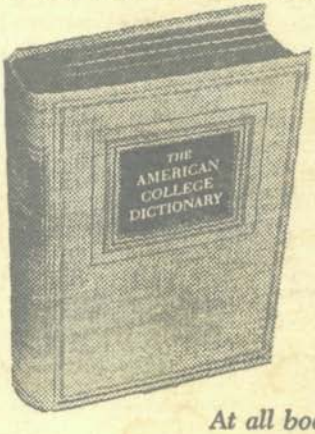

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